



20 YEARS OF BLOODY 'WAR ON TERROR'

HOW WEST SPREAD FEAR ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND >>Pages 9 and 10
BITTER LEGACY OF BRITISH AND US TORTURE PLUS THE GROWTH OF ISLAMOPHOBIA >>Page 11

Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2771 | 8 - 14 September 2021 | socialistworker.co.uk

TORIES' SOCIAL CARE CLASS WAR



THE CHANCELLOR

Rishi Sunak is Britain's richest MP and a multimillionaire. Married to Akshata Murthy who has a fortune of £430 million

Together they own four properties, including one in London worth £7 million

NATIONAL INSURANCE ON WEALTH? £0

THE CARE WORKER

Yasmeen is a community care worker and earns £9.90 an hour, 40 hours a week

Privately rents a former council flat

She already pays National Insurance

Contributions of £1,322 a year

BUT TORIES WANT HER TO PAY MORE

OPPRESSION

Texas abortion ban threatens women's lives

BIGOTS HAVE pushed through a brutal attack on women's access to abortion in the US state of Texas.

Now activists are preparing a massive response, with protests planned in every state in October. Millions of people in the US have already marched for women's rights—their anger is needed again.

>>Page 3

BENEFITS



Universal Credit cut will lead to mass poverty

TWO CLAIMANTS explain how the Tories' £20 a week benefit cut, delayed payments and the threat of "sanctions" are forcing them to struggle.

Boglarka says ministers have a "workhouse mentality", but that the Labour Party have abandoned people like her.

>>Page 20

SHORTAGES

Why pay is not determined by immigration rate

SOME ON the left say reducing the number of migrant workers improves pay.

That's wrong, says Charlie Kimber. Despite labour shortages most people still face pay curbs. The only way to break them is for workers to come together to fight.

>>Pages 14&15

MAKE THE RICH PAY

Why taxing the billionaires is just the start >>Pages 4&5



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'It is obvious that Britain is not a superpower'

Ben Wallace,
defence secretary

'But a superpower that is also not prepared to stick at something isn't probably a superpower either. It's just a big power'

Wallace moves on to the US

'I am pleased to say that at this stage we see no need to consider compulsory redundancies as part of this process'

Labour general secretary David Evans avoids picket lines at Labour Party conference over sacking Labour staff

'Concentrate on a handful of those already announced'

Labour PR people complain that the 200 policies Keir Starmer has announced are too many

'Reintroducing a pledge card of announcements'

Their inspired solution to the problem



Rich get the government to do what it is paid for

TWO TORY rogues from the past are embroiled in a row over political influence over contracts.

Former chancellor Philip Hammond has been accused of threatening to try and issue a legal injunction against an official body.

It rebuked him for using his government connections to assist a bank he now advises.

Lord Pickles, chairman of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (Acoba), said the panel had delayed publishing its verdict into a probe into Lord Hammond of Runnymede after he warned he was considering the action.

Lord Pickles is better known as Eric Pickles, part of David Cameron's cabinet from 2010 to 2015.

He previously served as chair of the Conservative Party.

Hammond had written to the second most senior official at the Treasury on behalf of OakNorth, a bank he is now paid to advise.

The Tory peer sent an email to top civil servant Charles Roxburg in July last year highlighting a "toolkit" developed by OakNorth Bank that the government could use to assess potential borrowers.

Lord Hammond joined the advisory board of the bank in 2020, a year after he left government.

He was ordered by Acoba to avoid contacting officials on behalf of



ERIC PICKLES

OakNorth Bank to influence policy or secure business for two years.

A NEW law will allow one of the Tories' biggest donors to keep bankrolling the party for life, despite having reportedly lived in the Bahamas for a decade.

John Gore, has given almost £4.2 million to the Conservative Party, making him the Tories' number one donor despite having spent "more than a decade away" from Britain.

Now Boris Johnson's Tories are bringing a new Elections Bill, which allows donors who live in tax havens to fund political parties indefinitely.

Currently donors can only fund parties from abroad for 15 years—but this will be abolished under the Elections Bill, which returned to the Commons on Monday.

The most recent Companies House records for Gore, published this year, list him as resident in the Bahamas.

WORKERS' unpaid overtime in Britain is now worth the equivalent of £219 billion a year in free labour. It has risen from an average of six hours a week in 2019 to seven hours in 2020, to almost eight hours in 2021. The figures come from a new study by the ADP Research Institute. Activity can range from working over breaks and starting early or staying late to regularly put in several hours of extra work each day for no additional pay. One in four British workers are giving away more than ten hours per week for free to their employers.

Overworked?

The government has brought in a new offence of animal theft, focused on dogs. This was allegedly needed to deal with a huge increase in dog thefts during lockdown. There is no evidence that there has even any significant increase, in recent years. There may have been a slight increase in 2020, but there were probably fewer dog thefts than in 2017 or 2018.

Don't dare squat my second home, or else

BRITISH people who have second, third or fourth homes in Spain are engaging what the BBC calls "hard men" to remove squatters from their properties.

One holiday home owner, Michael Regan, told the BBC that he had been informed there were squatters in his holiday home.

Then "People advised me to hire a company that specialises in negotiating with squatters to get them out."

Enter FueraOkupas—literally translated as "Get out squatters."

The company started work three

years ago and now gets 150 calls a day, says director Jorge Fe.

Regan agreed terms—a fee of £3,000.

"Dealing with these kinds of people is like a children's game for us, we have champion fighters on our team," says Jorge Fe. After several visits from Jorge Fe and his heavies, the squatters left.

FBI using your phone to spy from the sky

THE US FBI's spy plane programme targeted a man in Florida last year with nearly constant surveillance. They logged more than 400 hours in the air with a fleet of aircraft registered to what appear to be front companies.

The fleet of FBI planes, often small aircraft, are outfitted with high-tech video cameras and tracking devices known as "cell-site simulators" that trick mobile phones into connecting to the FBI's device rather than to a legitimate cellphone tower.

The revelations came in the case of Muhammed Momtaz Alazhari, an alleged supporter of the Islamic State, who federal prosecutors said was plotting a terrorist attack in the Tampa Bay area.

Alazhari has pleaded not guilty to one count of providing material support to terrorists and two firearms charges.

His lawyer has argued that any supposed evidence from the aerial surveillance should be struck out as it was obtained without a warrant.

Over a million migrants denied benefits

More than 1.3 million immigrants in Britain are barred from receiving benefits, such as Universal Credit and even free school meals for their children, according to a think-tank report.

The report, published last week by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), found "considerable evidence" that No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) visa conditions had led to "destitution and financial hardship".

IPPR calculated that 1.31 million people currently hold NRPF visas, following a freedom of information request to the Home Office.

This is a significant increase on previous estimates of 1 million.

During the pandemic NRPF visa holders who were sacked from work were unable to claim the meagre benefits to which other workers were entitled.

The system, first introduced under



Tony Blair's Labour government in 1999, now applies to nearly every immigrant who is on a time-limited visa.

The report added that European citizens who did not apply in time for permission to remain under the government's EU Settlement Scheme deadline of 30 June this year would find themselves barred from receiving vital social security support.

People arriving from Hong Kong under the programme for holders of UK-issued passports, are also barred from receiving public funds for their first five years in the country.

Large numbers of migrants with valid asylum claims—including, potentially, people fleeing Afghanistan—could also in future fall under the category.

Get in touch with Socialist Worker

Email reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Web www.socialistworker.co.uk

Facebook "Socialist Worker (Britain)"

Twitter @socialistworker

Newsdesk 020 7840 5656
Circulation 020 7840 5601

Write to Socialist Worker
PO Box 74955
London E16 9EJ

Anger grows as Texas bans abortion after six weeks

by ISABEL RINGROSE

BIGOTS HAVE pushed through a brutal attack on women's access to abortion in Texas, United States.

Legal threats mean providers will not offer women abortions in the state after six weeks of pregnancy. Anyone who does make such abortions available can be sued.

This includes terminations in cases of rape or incest.

Republican Texas governor Greg Abbott signed the anti-abortion Senate Bill 8 into law in May after it passed through the Republican-dominated legislature.

It bans abortion from as early as six weeks—often before many women even know they're pregnant.

Pro-abortion rights groups such as Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) tried to stop the legislation.

But on Wednesday this week the law went into effect after the Supreme Court failed to act to block it.

Anyone has the right to sue doctors, staff members at clinics, advisers, and anyone who helps pay for the procedure.

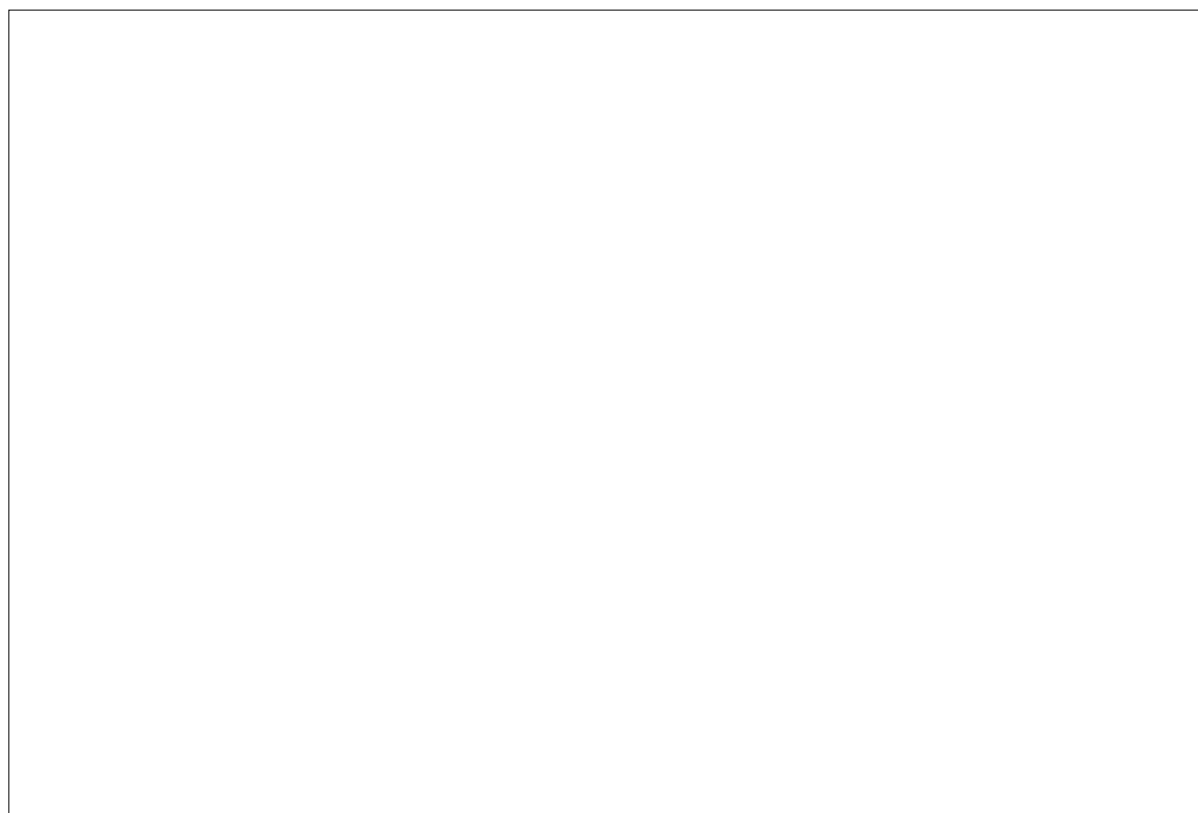
Texas is the first state to ban abortion this early on in pregnancy. Six weeks is the time when, according to anti-abortion campaigners, a "foetal heartbeat" can be detected.

But medical experts say this statement is misleading.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said that what is detected is "a portion of the foetal tissue that will become the heart as the embryo develops".

"Access to almost all abortion has just been cut off for millions of people," it added.

ACLU says some 90 percent of abortions in Texas take place after six weeks. It has described the legislation



PRO-CHOICE PROTEST on International Women's Day in Washington in 2017

as "blatantly unconstitutional", going against the federal Supreme Court case Roe v Wade.

This case protects the right to access abortion before 24 weeks.

Illegal

The addition in the law to sue anyone who "aids and abets" an illegal abortion is new to anti-abortion law in the US.

The ACLU believes the law will give rise to "a bounty hunting scheme" and costly "vigilante lawsuits" to harass and prevent women wanting and getting an abortion.

Women in Texas now in need of an abortion after six weeks must travel

to a different state.

For poor or working women, travelling this far to access abortion will not be possible.

Banning abortion doesn't stop women needing terminations—it stops safe and accessible abortions.

Last year when Texas barred most abortion procedures during the pandemic, the number of patients forced to travel out of state skyrocketed by 400 percent.

And it already has some of the highest number of cities in the US without access to care, meaning women have to travel at least 100 miles to reach a clinic.

Three other US states—Idaho,

Oklahoma and South Carolina—have all passed six-week ban bills this year.

In its next term in October, the US Supreme Court will have to decide whether Roe v Wade should be overruled in a case concerning the state of Mississippi.

The state passed a law banning abortions after 15 weeks.

Resistance is now needed in Texas and across the US to push back laws that prevent women from having control over their own bodies.

 **What's your story?**
Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Demo stands up to bigots

PRO-CHOICE ACTIVISTS protested in Parliament Square, central London, on Saturday against an annual anti-abortion march.

Around 40 protesters attended the Abortion Rights campaign's rally to demand safe, free and legal access to abortion for women in Britain. They stood in solidarity with the attacks on women in Texas, US (see left).

Protester Emma told Socialist Worker she "wants to defend the right to abortion, especially after what's happened in Texas".

"The pro-lifers just want to control women," she said. "Life would be so much more difficult for women if abortion access was restricted."

The March for Life UK—a campaign that began in the US—is an annual day out for bigots. Abortion Rights campaigners said it attracted around 2,500 people, the smallest number in years.

As the bigots marched around Parliament Square, they were met with loud cries of, "My body, my choice," from the pro-choice protesters.

Alisa works for Abortion Rights. She told Socialist Worker, "Although we don't have the same numbers today, nine out of ten people in Britain are pro-choice. So we represent the majority."

"March For Life say they're family friendly, but have links with extremists, fascists and nationalists."

"They're pro-birth, not life. Where the right rise, whether here, in Northern Ireland or across Europe, reproductive rights come under attack."

Union members brought banners from Unite, Unison and UCU branches to the pro-choice protest.

Abortion Rights members went to the US embassy to protest the rolling back of women's rights in Texas.

Abortion Rights national protests in London, Belfast and Edinburgh on 2 October in solidarity with the Women's March in the US. Go to abortionrights.org.uk

Socialist Worker

For daily updates and the stories that matter socialistworker.co.uk



- Download WhatsApp to your phone
- Save 07377 632 826 as Socialist Worker WhatsApp
- Send 'start' to the number

Protests hit back at ban

ACTIVISTS ARE getting organised to fight the abortion ban—and to defend women's rights in the upcoming legal battles.

Since the abortion ban became law, protests were quickly called across the US.

A "Bans off our bodies" protest was held outside the Texas state Capitol building on Wednesday.

In New York city activists gathered to demand "Abortion on demand & without apology".

And the Women's March is planning a national day of protests

on 2 October—two days before the Supreme Court begins its new term.

Marches will take place in every state of the country—and activists in Britain are also planning to hold demonstrations in solidarity.

The first Women's March on 21 January 2017, was the largest protest in US history at the time.

Some 5 million people took to the streets.

The march brought together women, LGBT+ people and anti-racists—and the upcoming protest will do the same.

Demo in New York

IN THIS WEEK

1951

Sanctions on Iran

Britain began an economic boycott of Iran after the country nationalised the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and gave British employees one week to pack their bags.



Tory social care plans are class war on poor

by CHARLIE KIMBER

BACK STORY

THE TORIES were set to unveil a scheme in response to the social care crisis this week. It will be another piece of class warfare.

The present system often provides substandard care and takes tens of thousands of pounds from people on the average wage.

It is riddled with profit-hungry corporations and based on workers doing long hours for poverty pay. HC-One, Four Seasons, Terra Firma and Care UK have been big private equity and hedge fund owners of care homes.

Private equity finance owns one in eight care home beds in England.

Social care provided by local councils in England is means-tested and is only available free to people with the highest needs and virtually no money.

There are two central issues that any reform would have to confront.

Firstly, the injustice is that cancer patients receive free NHS care until death, but dementia and Parkinson's patients must pay to go into social care.

This division was created when the NHS was founded—and has never been properly addressed.

Secondly, capitalism relies on “unpaid care” to look after people who aren't deemed useful for making profits. This usually means family members, mostly women, working for nothing.

The package is set to be an unjust and inadequate scheme—funded in a wholly unfair way.

A central feature is a cap on the amount an individual will pay in care costs of between £60,000 and £80,000.

That will mean nothing to most people.

A third of people in Britain have less than £600 in savings. Even the over 55's, who have the most savings, have an average of around £20,000.

So a cap will protect the wealth of the very rich, but any money that ordinary people have been able to put away will be wiped out.

The leaks also suggest that Johnson will propose paying for the scheme through an increase in

Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak

The Tories want to charge people more for social care

● A cap will be placed on care costs of between £60,000 and £80,000

● But a third of people in Britain have less than £600 in savings. That means money that poorer people have put away will be wiped out

● The scheme will be paid through an increase in national insurance contributions (NICs)

● But NICs hit workers on lower incomes far harder than the rich

contributions (NICs), a tax on people's pay.

This would break a manifesto pledge not to raise them.

It means making workers pay for the new scheme while letting the rich escape. Even some Tories are worried about a backlash.

A cabinet minister told The Telegraph newspaper, “They can't seriously be thinking about a tax raid on supermarket workers and nurses so children of Surrey homeowners can receive bigger inheritances.

“It makes a total mockery of the levelling-up agenda and Red Wallers will be up in arms.”

Workers generally pay 12 percent NICs on annual incomes between £6,515 and £50,270.

But the NICs rate on incomes above £50,270 is just 2 percent.

In an extraordinary handout to the rich, people on over £1,000 a week pay a lower proportion of their income in NICs compared to the less well-paid.

And the Tories were also expected to announce another attack this week. They were planning to set aside the pensions “triple lock” that sees them rise based on the highest of the average increase in earnings, inflation or 2.5 percent.

THE TORIES' new tax will protect the very rich and wipe away money that ordinary people have put away

Tax the rich to pay for social care system

A PUBLICLY-OWNED social care system—integrated with the NHS and funded on the same basis—would cost money.

It would need, for example, to greatly improve the conditions for people in care and transform the pay and conditions of care workers.

But taxing the rich, even in quite minor ways, could raise the cash—and far more.

For example, capital gains tax is paid on profits from buying and selling assets such as second homes, some shares and some businesses.

Present

Reforming the present regime, so it is taxed like income, would raise an additional £14 billion a year.

A tax on the wealth of very rich people would raise vastly more. The Wealth Tax Commission last year looked at setting the threshold for the tax at a level of £1 million per household—assuming two individuals with £500,000 each.

The very low rate for the tax would be 1 percent per year on wealth above the threshold. But still “a one-off wealth tax would raise £260 billion over five years”.

It adds that the tax, “could not be avoided by emigrating or moving money offshore.

“In fact, if well designed, it would be very difficult to avoid the tax legally”.

In another example of how more money could be raised from the rich, NICs presently apply only to earned income.

The vast sums enjoyed by the rich from share dividends, capital gains, rent paid by tenants and investment interest are untouched.

People earning as little as £120 a week pay NIC and so will pay more if the rate rises.

Someone grabbing £120,000—or £1.2 million—a year in dividends and other handouts pays not a penny more.

And NICs only apply to people below the state pension age so younger people are hit harder by a rise than older ones.

Because this is such an obviously unfair way to pay for anything, it's possible that chancellor Rishi Sunak could unveil a “surprise” new plan when it's actually announced.

But the Tories seemed prepared to ram through their outrageous idea. It must be completely opposed.

CARE WORKERS in Birmingham on strike in 2018

PICTURE: GEOFF DEXTER

Overworked and underpaid workers are looking for different jobs

Care staff shortages follow from low pay

FEW THINGS better illustrate the broken social care system in England than the 170,000 staff vacancies expected by the end of the year.

Rates of pay that hover around the minimum wage are the norm in the industry.

Shifts can be gruelling, involving a great deal of physical labour—as well as the stress of covering for many unfilled vacancies. Many workers report finishing their shifts in a state of exhaustion.

Labour shortages in some other industries are leading to small increases in pay. Many workers in social care are now leaving to find jobs in areas such as warehousing and distribution.

One care home manager said her care home had lost two staff recently to an online retail giant and six to better paid jobs in the NHS. Four people left because they don't want to have the Covid-19 vaccination that will shortly become mandatory in social care settings.

The government estimates that

up to 68,000 social care workers could leave their jobs when the vaccine rule comes into force in November.

But if social care goes into meltdown, the vaccination strategy will only be a small part of what caused the crisis.

Three quarters of care home operators are reporting an increase in staff quitting since April.

There were already estimated to be more than 120,000 social care vacancies before the pandemic.

The National Care Association, which represents care home bosses, says that one in ten posts could be vacant by the end of the year. And that could lead to a meltdown of the whole system.

The care homes staff crisis shows that the system of outsourcing social care to the private sector is unworkable.

Instead, there needs to be a publicly-funding National Care Service that is integrated into the NHS, with all staff earning decent pay.

Labour misses the mood

LABOUR HAS tried to avoid a clear call for taxing the rich and big business to pay for the NHS and social care.

Last week the Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said he could not rule out the possibility of Labour supporting a rise in national insurance contributions (NICs).

He said this was “a complicated area”.

Labour might find it complicated because in 2002 Labour chancellor Gordon Brown announced a rise in national insurance that he said would go to the NHS.

The Tories at the time denounced it as “a tax on ordinary families”.

By last Sunday Labour had realised that the NICs rise was unpopular among Tory MPs—who feared a backlash—let alone among ordinary people.

Shadow Foreign Secretary Lisa Nandy said the “broad principle” of demands for a wealth tax to fund social care reform were “absolutely right”.

Meanwhile Labour leader Keir Starmer found time to tweet tribute “to our brave armed forces” and British sporting

successes. He had tweeted nothing about the care plans by Monday morning.

The TUC trade union federation has come out for a wealth tax.

It said that raising Capital Gains Tax (see page 4) is “a much fairer way to fund social care than hiking workers' and businesses' national insurance contributions.”

And it calls for an end to wealth and assets being taxed at a lower rate than working people.

That's right—although the TUC should stop worrying about more tax on businesses.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

‘TAX THE RICH’ IS JUST THE START OF WHAT’S NEEDED

THE TORIES this week made workers pay more from their wages so the super-wealthy could protect their inheritances. No wonder that the alternative of taxing the rich is hugely popular.

Even Labour leader Keir Starmer was eventually dragged into writing to Boris Johnson to say, “Those with the broadest shoulders should pay more.”

“Broadest shoulders” is Starmer's pathetic attempt at hitting the rich, while also keeping them on his side.

In any case, taxing the rich is just the start.

It shouldn't mean a slightly above average income tax rate for the highest earners, or a one-off levy.

Taxing the wealthy means taking all the loot they've grabbed, trousered and stolen.

During the pandemic—when homelessness spiked and many workers were forced to live on just 80 percent of their wage—Britain created a record number of new billionaires.

And these billionaires have got £290 million richer every day during the Covid-19 crisis.

Why should they keep a penny of it?

Why should they be allowed to pass on vast wealth, generated from the sweat of workers and the existence of society, to their chosen inheritors?

We have to fight to rid ourselves of the system that produces wealth for some on such an eye watering scale, while leaving others in abject poverty.

Capitalism isn't “broken” because it makes the poor pay while the rich hoard. It's in its nature to produce vast riches for a few and low pay for most.

As the world's richest individual Jeff Bezos revealingly admitted after his recent space

flight, “I want to thank every Amazon employee because you guys paid for all this”.

And it's why those who support capitalism are never going to demand the abolition of billionaires.

It would mean a confrontation with the fundamentals of the system.

Starmer is ineffective because he can never say capitalism has to go.

The ruling political elite's interests are also those of the rich. They run in the same circles, or are the same people.

Upping taxes on earnings, property and inheritance would certainly mean more money for ordinary people.

But this won't happen easily as the bosses will protect their system.

The class warfare intensified by the Tories this week should be a spur to more struggle, more resistance, more demands for big pay rises, more determination to overthrow capitalism.

It's right to say tax the rich. But it's not just about taxing the rich, but ripping up the entire system that creates their wealth and protects it for them.

“British billionaires got £290 million richer every day during this crisis”

NO TO THE CORONAVIRUS ACT

BORIS JOHNSON has recklessly abandoned all the Covid-19 regulations such as mask wearing and social distancing.

He has herded children and workers into unsafe schools.

But he wants to renew the 2020 Coronavirus Act.

It means vastly extended state powers, allowing police to detain and fine anyone they think has Covid-19.

Most of those convicted under the act have since seen their cases overturned. But the state still want

to keep the act. Johnson's plans to renew the legislation aren't about protecting public health.

That requires encouraging safety measures. It means keeping non-essential workers out of unsafe workplaces.

And it means transforming the sick pay regime so people can afford to stay at home if they are unwell.

Renewing the act is about bolstering repressive powers. Governments often pass “emergency” measures that just

happen to be still in existence 20 years or more later.

Some “libertarian” Tory MPs say they will oppose the act when it is voted on soon.

But they won't oppose the protest-smashing police bill gong through parliament, or the attacks on refugee rights through the nationality and borders bill, or the restrictions on voting rights.

We say yes to action to beat back Covid-19, no to the state powers that are smuggled through using the excuse of the pandemic.



ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Europe's imperialism is still reliant on US

THE WESTERN ruling classes' response to the entirely predictable Taliban victory in Afghanistan is astonishing—combining arrogance, self-deception, and panic. In the United States this is muted by partisanship.

The liberal interventionists in the Democratic Party don't want to weaken Joe Biden when he is under concerted, if hypocritical, attack from the Republicans. After all it was Donald Trump who agreed with the Taliban in 2020 to withdraw US troops.

It is in western Europe that the denunciations of the US withdrawal have free rein. The arrogance of liberal imperialism was summed up perfectly by Constanze Stelzenmuller of the Brookings Institution thinktank.

She said, "The effort was not all in vain. Al-Qaeda were driven out. The lives of many were immeasurably improved—above all, those of women. There is now an Afghan civil society that is educated and connected with the world as never before. And it has our cell phone numbers."

As if Afghans needed the benign guidance of Nato—now presumably continued via WhatsApp—to become social and political actors.

Stelzenmuller praises the asinine House of Commons speech by Tory MP Tom Tugendhat. He has repeatedly demanded to know why Britain, alongside other European members of Nato, didn't try to keep up the occupation.

Boris Johnson and Angela Merkel don't agree about much, but they both made it clear that a continued military presence in Afghanistan was impossible without US support.

France and Britain initiated the Nato intervention in Libya in 2011, but soon ran out of weapons stocks and needed the Pentagon to step in and take over the heavy lifting.

As the very establishment International Relations scholar Lawrence Freedman tweeted, "The UK and France mounted a joint operation in the Middle East in 1956 [to retake the Suez Canal] which they had to abandon because the US wouldn't support it. There is no new strategic reality that has suddenly been disclosed."

Dependence

It is indeed Europe's military dependence on the US that gives rise to panic in the continent's capitals. European elites are worrying that a US preoccupied with its domestic problems and the rise of China will no longer provide them with military security, notably against Russia.

Versions of the same anxiety have existed since the late 1940s. The creation of Nato was about committing the US to maintaining a military presence in western Europe. And it was about brigading together the US and its allies against the Soviet Union and its east European client states.

It's true that strategic competition with China is the US's first foreign policy priority. But this has been the case ever since the liberal hero Barack Obama's "tilt" towards Asia a decade ago.

Another "strategic reality" that hasn't changed is that the global dominance of US imperialism depends on keeping the other advanced capitalist states in western Europe and east Asia under its thumb. It continues to have military bases in Britain, Germany, Japan, and South Korea.

In the confrontation with Russia over Ukraine, it was the US that pushed the Europeans to impose tougher sanctions on Moscow. It has been leading Nato exercises close to the EU's borders with Russia.

The Afghan debacle—and especially Biden's failure to keep the Europeans informed—has provoked more chatter about the EU developing greater "strategic autonomy".

European commissioner Thierry Breton told the Financial Times that "the EU has learnt the hard way" from the Afghanistan crisis about the need to build up its own defence capabilities and develop the 'attributes of hard power'.

But what's under discussion is the development of a 5,000-strong European "rapid reaction force". This isn't going to scare Russia, the world's second nuclear power, with a million-strong armed forces equipped with upgraded weapons systems.

The truth is that, despite the frictions between them, the US and Europe need each other. Their problem is that they represent a shrinking share of global economic output. The US remains overwhelmingly the greatest military power, but the fall of Kabul has reminded everyone of its vulnerability.



CLIMATE ACTIVISTS marched in central London for the last day of XR's rebellion last Saturday

Extinction Rebellion demands an end to climate destruction

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

EXTINCTION Rebellion (XR) concluded its "Impossible Rebellion" last Saturday after two weeks of actions, marches—and over 500 arrests.

Up to a thousand people joined a March for Nature in central London and groups affiliated to XR including Animal Rebellion, Ocean Rebellion and XR Doctors all joined the protest.

Many of the rebels on Saturday said that they believed that the two weeks were a success.

Masud from Birmingham said that while numbers may not have been as large as other rebellions, people were still attracted to it by recent reports on the urgency of climate action. He also thought it had built on work done by XR previously.

"We've been explicit about the need to rebel against the system, and that it is an emergency. I still think people are drawn to that," he said.

Martha, a school student, said that the impact of Hurricane Ida is a stark reminder of the worsening climate crisis.

"Seeing a storm wreck a country like the US that is so rich is always shocking. I think it will really open people's eyes," she said.

Martha added that she and

other students at her school are currently organising for the 24 September global climate strikes.

There was a celebratory atmosphere at the protest with rebels dressed up as bees, birds and even an elephant.

Activists carried signs with slogans such as "Can't buy your way out of extinction" and "Stop the war on nature". The protest assembled in Trafalgar Square and marched to Hyde Park for a closing ceremony.

Many of the rebels on the march voiced their opinion about where XR should go next.



Extinction Rebellion rebels also focussed on animals

Keep up the fightback

ACTIVISTS also discussed which other fights Extinction Rebellion needs to be part of.

Protester Lola said that while the week had been positive, XR must also be part of the fight against the Tories' protest-targeting police bill.

She said, "I'm worried that the police bill will go through. If it does, we need to be ready. We need to make plans and think about how

we can be even more disruptive next time."

XR's rebellion has successfully highlighted key climate issues. And there are intense debates about how to win system change and confront capitalism.

Socialists have to be part of this movement. They must argue for mobilisations around the climate strike on 24 September and around Glasgow's Cop26 international climate conference in November.

Gillian from London made it very clear that she thought that XR should first and foremost "follow the money".

"We need to keep targeting finance and the banks.

"They are calling the shots and are leading us to disaster."

Lola, who had joined the protest from Tower Hamlets, east London, told Socialist Worker that she thinks Covid-19 had an impact on the numbers who joined the rebellion.

But she also highlighted how important it is to build XR actions.

"If we have enough people we can block whatever road we like, we can create much more disruption.

"Our goal should be to build this movement as big as possible," she said.

Liam is a teacher and a member of the NEU union. He said workers should play an important part in the struggle for climate justice.

"As teachers we need to be pushing for climate education, make schools less polluted places and push for them to be net zero schools.

"Workers should be more of focus for XR. There's a lot we could bring to the movement," he said.



Got a story?

Email ideas to reports@socialistworker.co.uk

After Graham win, Unite activists want change

by ISABEL RINGROSE

NOW THAT Sharon Graham has taken over as general secretary of the Unite union, activists are discussing how to implement promises that were made during the election campaign.

Graham won because of the feeling for change. Now there needs to be a reset in the union's approach.

It must be more aggressive towards employers and the government and ditch any notion of "partnership".

That will also mean more democracy and more participation by ordinary members.

Camille, chair of Unite Public Health England Colindale LE/985 branch (pc), wants to see "more lay rep involvement".

"This was the main promise of Graham's campaign—getting people in the workplace into trade union structures and revitalising branches," she explained.

"Any new activist trying to understand the union structures will have difficulty.

"It's about helping people to understand rules, deadlines, how to pass a motion, working out which branch they're in."

"Then people can start organising and agitating, talking to members, and building the confidence to start call meetings at work and finding what motivates people."

Pat Carmody is a Unite activist in Oxford and the south east. "The structures need change—we've got a problem where too much power is vested in regional secretaries," he explained.

"We need to make sure young members are central to activity, and the structure and leadership of campaigns."

Pat said there are upcoming campaigns that will need support. "The NHS consultative ballot needs a big turnout in the strike ballot and then victory.

"The days of action need to be stepped up and supported—every Unite activist should be around them, and health branches need to take those seriously.

Lessons

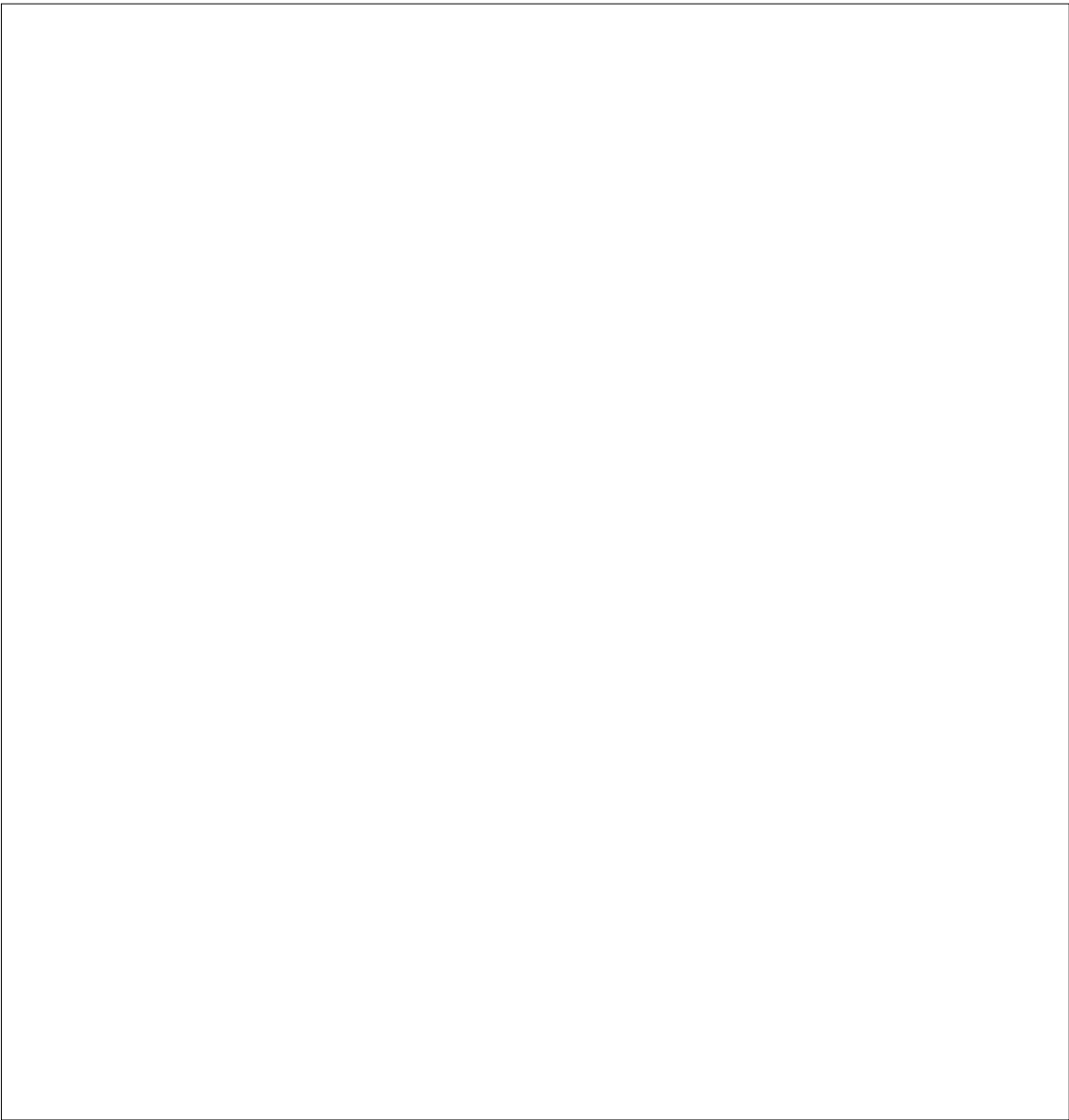
"Then there's the fire and rehire campaign—that really needs to be ramped up.

"Take lessons learnt from the defeat at JDE to work out how we turn future struggles around.

"And we need to make sure activists on the ground are given the confidence to take a lead in disputes and take them out of the hands of the bureaucrats.

Richard Milner, a delegate to the East Midlands Unite regional committee said, "Really we want people to show solidarity through industrial action.

"For the JDE strike—why was



UNITE MEMBERS protesting at Tesco during the Two Sisters dispute in 2017

there no leafletting across every supermarket explaining that certain companies were threatening to move work offshore and implement a £7,000 wage cut?

"With more activists involved that could've been done and it's a form of leverage.

"Or the rank and file should be able to contact all other shop stewards and activists to say we're in dispute and please support us without needing full time officials," he added.

Camille also said ways of contacting members could be made simpler.

"Being able to contact members has to be tightened up to get organised," she said.

"Any industrial action will depend on how well connected you are to members and basic communication is vital.

From that people can get involved, find networks and build solidarity."

Right hasn't gone away

CAMILLE explained that the Unite United Left is "dominated by bureaucrats looking to parliamentary politics".

"It's broken," she added. "People involved in Graham's campaign don't want a version two of the United Left. It's been made very clear that this doesn't work."

"Just because we've got a left wing general secretary doesn't mean the right has disappeared—they're still organising against it," she added.

"So we can't just change the whole structure, it has to be brought up from the ground.

"Graham will bring more accountability for reps by broadcasting meetings so we can hear what they're saying, giving transparency. People are sick of backroom deals."

Richard pointed out that people who are active at work where the union is not recognised should be fast tracked to be a union rep.

He said, "We need to facilitate people trying to build the union's recognition through the union."

Pat agrees, "There are huge swathes of Unite members in places that don't have recognition but want to get active. We have to find a way to create a space for them."

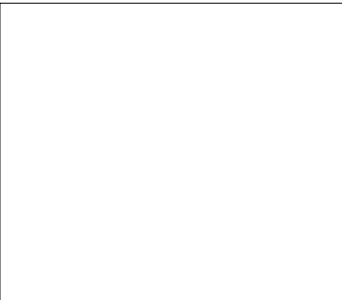
We must make reps' meetings regular

SHARON GRAHAM has promised to build combines within the union—something that activists think is crucial.

"Reps combines are where all the reps from a sector are put in a room together from loads of companies to talk," Camille explained.

"The benefit of this is finding out that the company next door gets six more days of holiday pay than you. So reps can go back to bosses and ask why they don't.

"We need to make them a

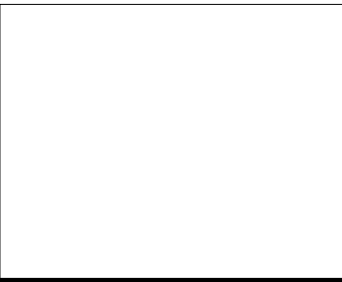


Fighting at JDE earlier this year

more regular thing to get more contact between lay reps."

Richard said, "Not every rep will know how to improve workers' confidence in the workplace. This happens by the working class winning a big victory, and with lessons on how to organise in the workplace.

"We need meetings to be really good, because people get confidence from being together.



Unite has power in numbers

Graham needs to teach that to people.

"She's already made the commitment to provide resources to help every branch get dispute ready.

"Things like records being up to date are important to know. Unions can help sort this out and help disputes to find out what they need to win.

"We also should be looking to create Stand Up to Racism groups or green groups and so on at work. There is union policy in favour of doing those things and it's a way to take more issues up" said Richard.

Pat added, "Graham's victory opened a door—we need to use this space to argue for activity and workplace organisation and how we go back to basics."



More die as US state fails those hit by storm

Far from helping, President Biden is creating conditions that will lead to more disasters, says Sophie Squire

THE DEATH toll after Hurricane Ida swept across the eastern US last week has risen to more than 70 people—and many people are still missing.

The huge storm brought devastation to Louisiana and the city New Orleans last week, but since then flash flooding and heavy rains have hit the north east of the country.

Most of those who died after flooding in New York city were trapped in basement apartments, which often house the city's poorest residents.

Many people are angry that the state made no plans to evacuate those living in these apartments when it became clear that the hurricane rains were going to hit and flooding was inevitable.

Francisco Moya, a city councillor from Queens told the New York Times, "It is unacceptable that we did not prepare for Ida with the same rigour that we did for (storm) Henri, and that is a failure on the city's part."

In the neighbouring state of New Jersey, Ida caused 27 storm deaths and four people are still missing. Many people died after flooding trapped them in their cars.

Pipeline

The storm has also ruptured an oil pipeline in the Gulf of Mexico.

Photographs of the spill taken just off Port Fourchon, Louisiana showed a miles-long slick on top of the waves.

Meanwhile, the state of Louisiana is still in crisis with some parts of the state expected to be without power until the end of the month, and many still without running water or sanitation.

Almost 600,000 people are affected.

Eric Mertz, a resident of St Charles Parish in New Orleans said, "I'm just wondering where the help is."

"I don't have air conditioning. No lights. I had Covid last year. I was in intensive care for 14 days, and

BACK STORY

Hurricane Ida turned rapidly from a storm into a deadly mix of wind and rain last week

● Louisiana and the states of the Gulf were first hit, and many areas will not recover for months

● Many people still have no electricity or fresh water

● Heavy rains also hit the US north east. Some drowned in apartment basements or trapped in cars.

I'm on oxygen. And I don't have any electricity. It's rough."

It was revealed this week that residents of seven care homes in Louisiana were found relocated to a packed warehouse to ride out the storm.

Seven patients died, and many were hospitalised there, in squalid conditions that officials said, "may cause a danger to public life, health and safety".

People were on mattresses on the floor, without food or clean clothes, surrounded by a strong odour of faeces.

The care homes are operated by a "commercial developer".

President Biden, speaking at the White House last Friday, said that the US state was "here to help" all those affected by the storm.

In reality, Biden is increasing the likelihood of climate chaos.

As Hurricane Ida hit, his administration announced they would open up more of the Gulf of Mexico to oil and gas exploration.

While the hurricane has demonstrated the state's inability to prepare for extreme weather, it also shows Biden will always be on the side of the oil and gas bosses.

The protests planned for the COP climate talks in Scotland in November will be an opportunity for people to show their anger at Biden and all the other world leaders whose pursuit of profits is leading to disaster.

IN LOUISIANA people are still sifting through the remains of their houses after last week's hurricane

JAPAN

PM resigns after Olympic Covid crisis

JAPAN'S PRIME minister has been forced from office as his popularity plummets due to the government's handling of coronavirus.

Yoshihide Suga will step down after just a year in the job.

He announced on Friday of last week that he would not seek re-election in this month's leadership race for the ruling right wing Liberal Democratic party.

The winner of that contest

will lead the party in a general election that must be held by 30 November.

Following the Olympics, coronavirus cases have hit record highs, hospitals are turning away patients and the vaccination campaign remains very limited.

In Tokyo alone, 4,292 people were hospitalised with Covid-19 last Sunday, with 264 of them critically ill.

None of this should come as a surprise. Scientists on the

Tokyo Covid-19 Monitoring Committee warned on 20 August that "infection will rampage through the nation to a disastrous level. This is an emergency."

None of this stopped the authorities pressing on with the Paralympics as well.

And organisers invited municipal authorities to send over 100,000 school children attend events.

This has led to a further surge of infections.

INDIA

Return of farmers' movement shakes city

THE FARMERS' movement in India seems set to revive this autumn with big protests and strikes.

Tens of thousands of farmers in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh this week have taken to the streets.

They are demanding the government repeal its recently-passed farming laws which will make it easier for giant multinationals to grab agriculture.

State subsidies of key crops will be phased out.

Reports say at least 500,000 farmers and supporters took part with tractors in Muzaffarnagar.

Protest leaders pledged to occupy all roads with a 12-mile radius of the city.

"We'll intensify our protest by going to every single city and town of Uttar Pradesh to convey the message that Modi's government is anti-farmer," Rakesh Tikait told the BBC.

The movement is calling for a nationwide strike on 27 September.

Protesting farmers in Uttar Pradesh

US SOLDIERS on patrol in an Iraq still smouldering after aerial bombardment

20 YEARS OF BLOODY 'WAR ON TERROR'

Twenty years after the launch of the War on Terror, it's time for a reckoning. **Socialist Worker** looks at the destruction wrought by two decades of wars, lifts the lid on the torture that accompanied it, and addresses the Islamophobia that was used to justify it all

THE WAR on Terror—launched 20 years ago—has been devastating for people across the Middle East, Africa and central Asia.

The US claimed it was in retaliation for the 9/11 attacks. In reality the deliberate crashing of four aeroplanes became a convenient justification for president George Bush's assaults.

The West invaded countries under the guise of protecting the American homeland and bringing stability across the world.

Bush announced that the US would bring down Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda organisation, along with the Taliban and other terrorist networks. But the true terror was that waged by the US from 2001 until now in pursuit of power, profit and global dominance.

The war spans four American presidents, from Bush to Barack Obama, Donald Trump and now Joe Biden. Each administration's foreign policy was implemented with different tactics, but it united politicians across the political spectrum.

And although the early invasions were painted as a twisted and misguided attack under Bush, 20 years on it binds together the interests of the US ruling class. The post-9/11

IRAQ

Seeds of future war in Syria sown by the US capture of Baghdad

HEAVY BOMBARDMENT and force from the air and ground began the Iraq War.

George Bush warned of "serious consequences" for Iraq for owning weapons of mass destruction. That was a complete fabrication he and then prime minister Tony Blair created for their own ends.

Bush and Blair worked to build a case for invading Iraq, with falsified evidence.

On 21 March 2003 the first troops entered and by April the capital Baghdad was in US control as Hussein's government fell.

By 2004 the US transferred power to a new puppet government, built on sectarian lines. But the invasion had destroyed Iraq's infrastructure, leaving ordinary people suffering.

From the very beginning the West's occupying forces faced resistance and insurgencies—and a civil war in 2006. From March 2003 to March 2005, the US was responsible for 37 percent of 24,865

civilians killed—the largest proportion of any force.

Thanks to the War on Terror, in 2008 Iraq's humanitarian situation was among the most critical in the world with millions forced to rely on insufficient and poor water.

US troops withdrew in 2011 but were back only three years later to drop airstrikes on Isis who had emerged during the resistance. Since 2017, a few thousand soldiers have remained in Iraq.

Some 11 million Iraqis are in need of humanitarian assistance, and war has created two million refugees.

The result of crushing resistance in Iraq directly produced Isis's rise in northern Iraq and Syria.

Throughout much of the War on Terror, the West branded Syria an enemy.

Yet it also sent prisoners there to be tortured. The Syrian regime's efforts

wars have displaced at least 59 million people in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and the Philippines. And the true number of civilian deaths will never be known—ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions.

The devastation is unquantifiable—and ongoing. Just between 2018 and 2020 the US undertook missions in 85 countries, including airstrikes and ground combat.

Dominance

The objectives of the war were to spread US dominance internationally when its economic power was faltering. And stability and control in the Middle East is also crucial for the US's oil interests in the region.

Operation Enduring Freedom—the name used by Bush for war in Afghanistan—was the first invasion of the campaign.

Even before the attacks on 11 September 2001, the Bush regime decided to give Afghanistan an ultimatum—hand over bin Laden or face attack. Bush soon had his excuse for the invasion he sought.

But the shambles in Afghanistan, and the US's defeat in Iraq show that the War on Terror has been a huge failure for the US.

Not only has its military—the largest in the world—been beaten repeatedly, but US interference has actually given rise to more terror. The devastation caused by the US's wars paved the way for the growth of new terrorist groups such as Isis. The hatred aimed at the US played in favour of terrorist groups.

The War on Terror led to mass resistance across the world too. In some countries the anti-war movement has resisted the US, its allies and imperialist wars for two decades.

>>Continued on page 10

‘US SOLDIERS’ BRUTALITY IN ABU GHRAIB SHOWED HOW TORTURE WAS CENTRAL TO THE WAR’

>>Continued from previous page

to crush the revolution that began in 2011 turned the uprising into a civil war—which Isis spread into from Iraq. Britain, the US and France sent money to rebel fighters.

As the chaos worsened Isis and al-Qaeda joined the fighting against the rebels and government. The US then dropped its bombs.

The US waded into the civil war in Syria to put down Isis in September 2014—13 years after 9/11.

The Pentagon has acknowledged its rules to avoid civilian casualties are looser in Syria than anywhere else. And it has provided falsified data to hide the true number of civilian deaths.

Some of the worst civilian casualties included a coalition airstrike in July 2016 that killed 56 civilians, including 11 children.

Another airstrike in March 2017 killed 46 and wounded more than 100 after planes hit a mosque. In June 2018



Isis in Iraq grew during US occupation

an airstrike killed 70 civilians, mostly women and children, including 39 members of the same extended family.

By April 2021 an estimated 8,311 to 13,188 civilian deaths had been suffered due to US-led and backed airstrikes. The US’s own estimate was 1,410.

Military action in Syria continues.

President George Bush celebrating victory over Iraq by visiting the crew of aircraft carrier the USS Abraham Lincoln in May 2003. Bush thought the war was essentially over but years later the fighting continued

TORTURE

West used barbaric measures to impose fear

THE EVENING after 9/11, George Bush told Richard Clark, the US counter-terrorism chief, “Everything is available for the pursuit of this war. Any barriers in your way, they’re gone. I don’t care what the international lawyers say, we are going to kick some ass.”

On 17 September Bush signed a directive giving the CIA the power to secretly imprison detainees. They were called detainees for a reason.

While 9/11 was treated as an act of war the US was determined not to follow rules on how to treat prisoners.

CIA top lawyers considered the legality of torture, writing that “the Israeli example” could serve as “a possible basis for arguing torture was necessary to prevent imminent, significant, physical harm to persons.”

The first detainees taken in Afghanistan were innocent and had been sold to the CIA for bounties.

In the first five years of the occupation some 83,000 people were incarcerated by US forces—93 percent were captured by local militiamen and exchanged for US bounty payments.

When the war spread to Iraq another 100,000 people were detained. They were subjected to beatings, electric shocks, extreme cold, suspension from the ceiling by their arms, sexual humiliation, hooding, sleep deprivation, bombardment with white noise and drowning in buckets of water.

In 2002 the torture programme

jet. The 737 flew to Baghdad and then on to the Salt Pit prison outside the Afghan capital, Kabul. Masri was chained to the floor of the jet and injected with sedatives. He was released after four months of torture.

The US flight crew fared better. After the 737 delivered Masri to the Afghan prison it flew to the resort island of Majorca, where crew members stayed at a luxury hotel for two nights.

Handcuffed

The Salt Pit was an abandoned brick factory. CIA operatives wandered through dark corridors with head torches that scanned the bodies of detainees handcuffed to overhead bars. Most prisoners spent 22 hours a day like that. One was left hanging for 17 days.

Gul Rahman died in November 2002 naked from the waist down and chained hand and foot to a concrete floor. He froze to death.

The officer who ordered it received a £1,600 cash award for his “consistently superior work”. Gul was later recorded as a case of mistaken identity.

The prison moved to Bagram airbase. It became the hub of a huge network of torture sites.

At least 50 prisons were used to hold detainees in 28 countries, in addition to at least 25 more prisons in Afghanistan and 20 in Iraq. The US also used 17 ships as floating

prisons to hold and torture people

There were some 1,622 flights in and out of Britain by aircraft used in rendition torture flights between 2001 and 2006.

Outsourcing some of the torture was useful to Britain and US. It allowed politicians to deny overseeing torture. As in the US, British government ministers were not only authorising torture, they were encouraging it.

Thousands suffered under this system. British soldiers killed Baha Mousa in Iraq in 2003. He was held for 17 days.

As with the pictures of US soldier’s brutality to the 8,000 people in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, it showed how torture was central to the war of terror from top to bottom.

Defence of imperialism tied the rendition and torture to the occupation. The soldiers would do the initial arrests. Then, in a cruel filtering system, those thought to know something would be passed up the chain.

As a tool for gathering information it was pointless. But the purpose was to



Prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were keen to be photographed with British troops in Iraq

Ideology of war created the new racism of Islamophobia

Rather than an age-old prejudice, **Yuri Prasad** argues the war fashioned a new poison

SOME PEOPLE were already busy conjuring up Muslims as the US’s new enemy soon after the end of the Cold War in 1991.

Harvard professor Samuel P Huntington published an early version of his book The Clash of Civilisations in 1993—nearly a decade before 9/11.

In its final form Huntington wrote, “The ideal enemy for America would be ideologically hostile, racially and culturally different, and militarily strong enough to pose a credible threat to American security.”

The dividing line in Europe “has moved several hundred miles east. It is now the line dividing the peoples of Western Christianity...from Muslim and Orthodox peoples,” he went on.

Huntington’s “clash”, and it’s singling out of Muslims, became a guiding light to president George Bush and prime minister Tony Blair’s War on Terror.

Sometimes Blair talked of “good Muslims”—those who accepted that their culture needed “modernisation” to come into line with the West. But he mostly discussed “Bad Muslims”—those who opposed his wars and saw no need to adapt their faith to fit his prescription.

In general, Bush and Blair agreed that Islam was uniquely “backward” and incompatible with the modern world.

The task for the enlightened West was, therefore, to impose its superior values globally—by force, if necessary. Bush coined this “The New World Order”.

Targeting

The targeting of Muslims abroad also had deep ramifications at home.

It helped construct an “enemy within”. Everyone against the West’s wars, but specifically almost all Muslims, fell into this category. Muslims were to lose many of the rights that others citizens could lay claim to.

On Friday 2 June, 2006 some 250 police raided a house in Forest Gate, in east London, after a tip-off that the house was a “chemical weapons factory”.

Mohammed Abdul Kahar, aged 23, was shot while he and his brother Abdul were arrested.

The media were full of lurid tales—leaked by the police—of dirty bombs and terrorists that had blended into the community.

Then, on the 9 June, the brothers were released without charge.

No officers were found to have breached their duties, and no one year extended their solidarity to Palestinians. They’re victims of some of the most blatant anti-Muslim racism anywhere in the world.

Recent struggles against Islamophobia show us that fighting oppression has itself become a unifying force.

of the state that grew among Muslims in Britain cannot be overstated.

Some saw Islamophobia as a recurring feature of Christian societies going back to the Medieval Crusades. Others thought it was a passing phase that would end when memories of 9/11 passed.

Prejudices

But writer Arun Kundnani rightly described Islamophobia as a new form of “structural racism”.

He noted the way the prejudice was given life by those in positions of power, and was now deeply intertwined with the state and its laws.

“Its significance does not lie primarily in the individual prejudices it generates but in its wider political consequences,” he wrote.

This was a new form of racism, and it was being driven by those at the top of society.

The government’s Prevent programme, for example, aims to identify and counter political and religious “radicalisation”.

It acts as both a source of racism, in that it disproportionately targets young Muslims and oppresses them, but also as its ideological reinforcement.

By instructing all public sector bodies that their staff must report any signs of radicalisation, Prevent popularises the idea that Muslims are potential terrorists.

Though Islamophobia has played a terrible roll in igniting racism, it is important to know that it has not gone unchallenged.

From the millions who marched against the war to the thousands who protested against the police shooting in Forest Gate, people of all backgrounds have fought to repel Islamophobia.

But the demonisation of Muslims did spread fear that becoming political, and taking a stand against the War on Terror could see you targeted by the state.

That caused some who had joined the movement to retreat. That state-inspired fear did not last long.

It can hardly be an accident that many of those who joined the Black Lives Matter movement last year extended their solidarity to Palestinians. They’re victims of some of the most blatant anti-Muslim racism anywhere in the world.

Recent struggles against Islamophobia show us that fighting oppression has itself become a unifying force.

YEMEN AND LIBYA

How the ‘War on Terror’ spread across Middle East and beyond

YEMEN HAS suffered immensely from the War on Terror. In January 2009, Saudi Arabian and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda merged.

So on 24 December 2009, the US began drone strikes—inflicting its own terror on Yemeni people.

US warplanes fired cruise missiles at supposed al-Qaeda training camps in Yemen.

Instead, they hit a village killing more than 60 civilians, 28 of them children. The US followed up with another series of drone attacks.

By 2014, fighters from the Houthis movement ousted President Hadi who was backed by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia invaded, blockaded and bombarded Yemen starting from 2015—an horrific war that continues to this day.

Yemen now faces the biggest humanitarian crisis on the planet—with 80 percent of the population in need of aid. More than two million children under five suffer from

acute malnutrition. The US and Britain have armed and supported the Saudi intervention.

US and British naval forces and British air forces also attacked Libya under the government of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The West had demonised Gaddafi at one point, then done deals with him, then turned on him again.

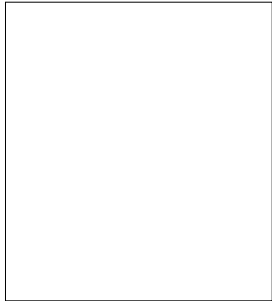
Justification

The justification was the War on Terror—the reality was the war was used as a justification to launch other invasions that may lean toward terrorist regimes.

The US intervention was full of hypocrisy, as was Britain and the US’s so-called “responsibility to protect” Libyan people.

After the invasion to remove Gaddafi, US forces left Libya and returned again in 2015 with airstrikes against Isis. Isabel Ringrose

Tony Blair with his old friend, Libya’s Colonel Gaddafi, in happier times in 2007



WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

The British army was beaten by sustained resistance in Basra, Iraq

20 years after 9/11 War, resistance and the failures of imperialism

HUDDERSFIELD
Wed 15 Sep, 6.30pm
290-168-1804

LONDON: ISLINGTON
Thu 16 Sep, 7pm
874-012-7970

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST
Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
543-023-057

LEEDS
Thu 23 Sep, 7pm
881-4770-0676

LONDON: SOUTH
Wed 15 Sep, 7pm
497-196-1801

LONDON: WEST AND NORTHWEST
Thu 16 Sep, 7.30pm
867-8194-6099

LIVERPOOL
Wed 15 Sep, 7pm
493-925-5919

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS
Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
818-391-0420

WALES
Wed 15 Sep, 7pm
902 964 963

BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE & STAFFORDSHIRE
Big pharma, Tories & Covid—will a vaccine solve the crisis?

Wed 22 Sep, 7.30pm
914-9548-1031

BRADFORD
Drugs—the socialist case for radical reform

Thu 16 Sep, 7pm
885-9187-7552

BRIGHTON & HOVE
Can the British economy bounce back from Covid?

Thu 23 Sep, 6.30pm
874-3262-3749

CAMBRIDGE
Why we hate Mondays—Marxism and alienation

Thu 16 Sep, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

CHESTERFIELD
People, parliament and power—is this democracy?

Thu 23 Sep, 7pm
828-532-8731

COLCHESTER
Code red—why capitalism causes climate catastrophe

Thu 16 Sep, 7.30pm
466-478-2013

DEVON & CORNWALL
Climate change, anti-racism and refugees

Thu 16 Sep, 7.30pm
865-2972-2883

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH
100 years of the Chinese Communist Party

Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
894-2628-7708

EAST MIDLANDS
Code red—why capitalism causes climate catastrophe

Wed 15 Sep, 7pm
354-874-4790

EDINBURGH
Climate change, anti-racism and refugees

Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
431-459-112

GLASGOW
The history of occupations

Thu 16 Sep, 7pm
879-2402-3259

HARLOW
Capitalism and slavery—the roots of racism

Thu 23 Sep, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HOME COUNTIES
Booklaunch: Rebellious Daughters of History

Thu 16 Sep, 6.30pm
992-204-9372

KENT
Capitalism and the fossil fuel economy

Thu 16 Sep, 8.15pm
434-623-8064

LONDON: HACKNEY
Will the economy bounce back after Covid?

Thu 16 Sep, 7.30pm
854-8245-8715

LONDON: HARINGEY
After Corbyn—has Labour lost its way?

Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
459-388-1576

LONDON: NEWHAM
Is Cuba socialist?

Wed 15 Sep, 7pm
288-098-8827

LONDON: SOUTH EAST
Can there be a progressive patriotism?

Thu 16 Sep, 7pm
529-913-6390

MANCHESTER
Code red—why capitalism causes climate catastrophe

Wed 22 Sep, 7.15pm
323-178-7151

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY
Booklaunch: Breaking up the British state—Scotland, Independence & Socialism

Wed 15 Sep, 7pm
861-2001-6477

PORTSMOUTH
Booklaunch: Rebellious Daughters of History

Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
488-934-2809

SHEFFIELD & SOUTH YORKSHIRE
Let's talk about sex—Marxism and sexual liberation

Thu 16 Sep, 7pm
528-174-9278

SOUTHAMPTON
Voice of the unheard? Ten years since the 2011 riots

Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
381-513-5080

WIGAN
Why Starmer is afraid of the left

Thu 16 Sep, 7pm
872-5136-9540

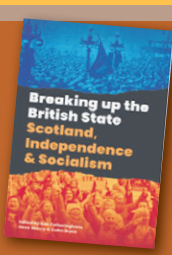
YORK & SCARBOROUGH
Code red—why capitalism causes climate catastrophe

Wed 15 Sep, 7.30pm
827-489-7492

BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



The Labour Party—a Marxist History
by Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein and Charlie Kimber, £14.99



Breaking Up the British State—Scotland, Independence & Socialism £12



Does privilege explain racism?
by Esme Choonara, Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad and Weyman Bennett, £3



Transgender Resistance
by Laura Miles £10

PHONE 020 7637 1848 WEB bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

CONTACT THE SWP

Phone 020 7840 5600
Email enquiries@swp.org.uk
Post PO Box 74955
London E16 9EJ

Caught on film—the neglect that caused the Grenfell fire

This powerful new documentary captures Grenfell residents' safety battles—and how they were ignored with catastrophic results, says **Isabel Ringrose**

GRENFELL—THE UNTOLD Story shares the experiences of survivors, bereaved people and former residents from the tower.

Previously unseen footage from artist Constantine Gras documents the residents' battle with the building's management before the fire, the fire itself, and the aftermath.

Residents share their experiences of life in the tower, from daily chats with neighbours, to memories with families at gatherings.

But resident Ed says those living in Grenfell were "treated with utter contempt" when refurbishments began. In 2014 a £10 million redevelopment was commissioned to give the tower new windows, heating, cladding and insulation.

The council's Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) was responsible for overseeing residents' concerns and health and safety. It assured residents they would be consulted.

But this wasn't the case.

It's frustrating to watch the TMO dismiss residents' worries, especially knowing the devastation to come.

Lack of water, lifts broken, and women with prams being forced up flights of stairs became all too common.

Constantine's videos of residents' lives during the refurbishment are also a reminder of those lost. Particularly hard hitting is footage of eight year old Mehdi.

He died with his mother, father, brother and sister in their 21st floor flat. A quarter of all children who lived in the tower died, totalling 18.

Battling

Other footage of residents who died shows them battling hard to be heard in meetings with councillors and the TMO. "We were fighting for our lives, but we were not aware of that," David said.

The documentary then goes to the night of the fire—with footage of the blaze spreading, eye witness accounts and 999 calls of desperate residents in need of help.

It is a terrifying insight. One chilling account is from Marcio, as he tries to escape with his pregnant wife and two daughters. Survivors share their stories of being assisted by their neighbours to evacuate.

With the inquiry into the fire ongoing, residents now want justice.

"Those who are accountable need to be held to account, there should be no way of hiding," Marcio says. "They put profit ahead of people's wellbeing. It's an important element of the inquiry to ensure this never happens again."

On Channel 4, Wednesday 8 September, 10pm and then on More 4



'PHOTO OP' by kennardphillips is on show at the Stop the War exhibition

Twenty years of anti-war visual art

EXHIBITION

NO! 20 YEARS OF STOP THE WAR: A VISUAL RETROSPECTIVE

Wednesday 8 September—Sunday 19 September. Nunnery Gallery, Bow Arts, east London, E3 2SJ. Register online at bit.ly/StW20

STOP THE War Coalition presents a 20-year account of artistic output in the anti-war

movement. The exhibition comprises diverse mediums and styles.

There are shock-value placards, stitched banner work, textile art, music, film, photography, prints, paintings and site-specific installations.

The works are culled from the organisation's archives and wider artistic collections. They include the recurring

blood-splat placards by David Gentleman, Vivienne Westwood's calico prayer flags and satirical anti-Trump placards.

There is also kennardphillips's Tony Blair selfie, "Photo Op", and cardboard placards by Banksy that were once distributed by close friends and marched through the 2003 mass London protest.

Chance to watch—or re-watch—Malcolm X film

STREAMING

MALCOLM X

Dir: Spike Lee
Available now on Netflix

THIS BIOPIC of the life of militant anti-racist fighter Malcolm X is now available on Netflix.

Directed by Spike Lee and starring Denzel Washington, it charts Malcom X's political journey.

Throughout his life, Malcolm X experienced racism and police repression. The film shows how, when his family's home was firebombed in 1929 in a racist

attack, police tried to pin the blame for it on his father Earl Little, who was an organiser for Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.

The film follows his conviction for petty crime, his recruitment to the Nation of Islam in prison, and his growth as a leading activist after his release.

This includes the protest Malcolm X organised outside a police station after Nation of Islam members were beaten and arrested. The film also traces his political journey to break with the Nation of Islam.



Denzel Washington as Malcolm X

RADIO

BRINGING UP BRITAIN

Starts Wednesday 15 September, 8pm, BBC Radio 4, and then on BBC Sounds

IN THIS four-part series Anjula Mutanda explores gender stereotypes and raising children.

In this first episode, she speaks to Sophie, a mother who was adamant she would protect her children from society's expectations of them.

But Sophie finds herself with a toddler son who loves tractors and trains and a 3 year old daughter who loves pink and princesses.

Mutanda brings together a series of experts from neuroscientists, to sociologists and psychologists to explore the gender norms children learn from the moment they are born.

RADIO

THE COMPASS—LIBYA'S REVOLUTION

Wednesdays 2:30am, BBC World Service and then on BBC Sounds

BBC REPORTER Tim Whewell, who covered the 2011 events, returns to Libya to find out what went wrong.

He talks to activists, such as the lawyer Fathi Terbil, whose arrest in 2011 was one of the sparks of the protests and uprising.

He also speaks to those who took up arms against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi.

And he questions the then Tory foreign secretary William Hague, on whether the West was right to intervene militarily.

TOP 5 BOOKS

Bestsellers at Bookmarks, the socialist Bookshop

- 1 **A Rebel's Guide to George Orwell**
John Newsinger
- 2 **Vygotsky, Education and Revolution**
Shirley Franklin
- 3 **The Dialectics of Art**
John Molyneux
- 4 **The Missing: The True Story of My Family in World War II**
Michael Rosen
- 5 **A Rebel's Guide to Engels**
Camilla Royle

Phone 020 7637 1848
bookmarksbookshop.co.uk
You can visit the Bookmarks shop at 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE

BOSSES IN some industries are screaming about shortages of workers. They say there aren't enough lorry drivers, there aren't enough chefs, there aren't enough butchers to slaughter the available pigs.

Supermarkets struggle to fill their shelves, Nando's had to close 45 of its restaurants because of a chicken shortage, McDonald's didn't have enough milkshakes.

Some companies have—imagine the horror—even had to offer higher wages and bonuses to attract workers.

Socialists and trade unionists should warmly welcome any opportunity to squeeze more from firms that have grown fat on cheap labour.

For far too long workers have faced pay freezes and cuts. Now it's time to hit back.

The Financial Times fears that present developments could see a long term trend “tilting the balance of negotiating power from capital towards labour”. Good—if it happens.

But there's a row about why there “aren't enough” workers, and it matters because the answer shapes the strategy for workers to win in the future.

One answer is that Brexit's chaotic disruption of supply chains shattered the normal running of the economy.

There's little doubt that the Tory version of Brexit has caused bottlenecks and obstacles to the distribution of goods.

The government's—and the European Union's—obsession with borders has caused some disruption.

But claims of worker shortages are also reported in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. And they are in similar sectors to Britain—hospitality, distribution, construction, health and social care.

SO IT'S not just about Brexit. And bosses were complaining about shortages well before the EU referendum.

In 2015 the bosses' Road haulage Association said there was a shortage of 50,000 lorry drivers.

The second major reason put forward, linked to Brexit, is the fall in the number of migrant workers.

Some on the left say rising wages now proves that migrants are a drain on native workers' living standards and that cutting their number works to boost pay.

Brexit, they say, is therefore good for workers because it has cut immigration.

Certainly large number of workers originally from EU countries have left Britain in



MIGRANTS, SHORTAGES AND WAGES

Some on the left say reduced numbers of migrant workers led pay to rise. Charlie Kimber argues the real cause of low wages and terrible conditions has been the failure of unions to fight for better



the last 18 months. But most workers have not seen a rise in wages.

Typical hourly wages advertised for cleaners, for example, have increased by 20p since March. But that just reflects the minimum wage rise of 20p an hour in April. There's been no surge in pay rates.

And most public sector workers face a pay freeze or a below-inflation “rise”.

Left wingers who say fewer

“British wages have fallen as a percentage of GDP since the mid-1970s

migrants have boosted wages often quote Karl Marx's analysis of the “reserve army of labour” to justify their position.

Marx spoke of an “industrial reserve army” which plays a role in stepping up competition between workers and pressures them to accept lower pay.

Marx explained that capitalism is the first economic system where there are “too many” people and that some can't be profitably employed. As

capitalism expands it tends to spend relatively more and more on machinery and technology, and less on workers.

A portion of potential workers is surplus to capitalism's requirements. Marx adds, “This surplus population forms a disposable industrial reserve army, that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost.”

Take away the “reserve army” of EU migrants waiting to work for low wages and hey presto, goes the argument, there is a shortage of workers and wages go up.

But the main industrial reserve army in Britain is not migrants.

It's the 1.6 million officially unemployed and the 1.8 million on the furlough scheme.

But no socialist would say the unemployed are the enemy of workers. Instead the argument has always been to unite employed and unemployed against the bosses.

MARX argued that workers must “organise a regular cooperation between employed and unemployed in order to destroy or weaken the ruinous effects of this natural law of capitalistic production on their class”.

Unity is equally necessary between migrant workers and workers born in Britain.

The central reason why bosses find it hard to recruit is not Brexit or curbs on migrants but low pay and rotten conditions.

Sarah O'Connor writes in the Financial Times that lorry drivers' average hourly wage is now just £11.80. And this is for a job that requires a qualification and training that workers often have to pay for themselves.

O'Connor quotes a job advert from logistics firm XPO. “You'll be working a minimum of 45 hours per week on an ‘any five from seven-day’ shift pattern, so your working days may change each week and could include weekend working.”

“You will also be starting early AM and must be prepared to work through the night.”

No wonder you might not rush to fill that vacancy.

British wages have declined sharply as a percentage of gross domestic product since the mid-1970s.

The percentage going to workers fell from 1974 as the Labour government attacked workers and militant rank and file organisation declined.

The fall continued for much of the Tory Margaret Thatcher years, and then slumped again after 1984 and another recession.

Average wages have only just returned to the level of 2007-8, before the financial crash.

It's about class power.

A low level of resistance enables bosses to force through

poverty wages. Think of how many employers have felt able to make outrageous fire and rehire demands during the pandemic. They have insisted on pay cuts as the condition of workers keeping their jobs.

And far too often, such as at British Gas and JDE coffee, bosses secured what they wanted. Workers fought bravely against the deals, but union leaders let them down.

Low pay also stops migrants coming to Britain. Contrary to the myth, most won't rush in and work for whatever bosses will offer.

Samuel Tombs, of the economics consultancy Pantheon Macroeconomics, points out that there are EU nationals who returned home during the pandemic last year who could come back to Britain if they wanted.

“Legally, most of these people can return if they wish. Indeed, applications for pre-settled and settled status have exceeded the official number of EU nationals in Britain at the end of 2019,” he says. But, he adds, “their enthusiasm to return is low.”

If there is a long term squeeze on wages, what's special about the situation now?

THERE ARE two temporary factors. The first is that the end of pandemic restrictions means bosses all try to recruit at the same time. This creates shortages.

The second is that, however inadequate, furlough schemes and similar measures have enabled quite large numbers of workers to survive—just—without working. They are under less pressure than if they had been sacked.

But all these schemes are now ending.

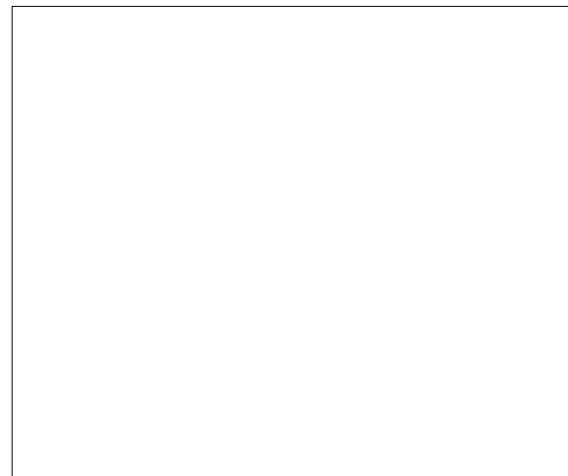
Across the world, ruling classes will try to use the renewed threat of unemployment to bear down on wages.

This was expressed most brutally by US Fox News host Laura Ingraham. Enraged by people who are reluctant to brave Covid-19 and return to work, Ingraham said, “What if we just cut off the unemployment?”

As she noted, “Hunger is a pretty powerful thing.”

The Tories are not quite so blatant, but it's the same message.

Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng recently told



Tory minster Kwasi Kwarteng says workers face an 'uncertain future' (top) Strikes, such as those at Thurrock council, in Essex, earlier this year, can make better wages a reality (above)

employers that as the furlough scheme ends “many UK-based workers now face an uncertain future and need to find new employment opportunities”.

The Tories hope workers who are ditched now will be so desperate to avoid the horror regime of meagre benefits, sanctions and poverty they will accept low pay.

The end of furlough and the simultaneous £20 a week cut in Universal Credit is not an unfortunate accident. It's a strategy.

All of this means that unions and the left need a strategy for overturning the squeeze on wages.

It's not much of a plan to hope for the present labour shortages to last forever.

There is no effective alternative to resistance, struggle and confrontation. Instead of obsessing about migrants, the left needs to concentrate on fighting bosses and the Tories.

We need more of the best form of “labour shortages” which can really improve wages and conditions—strikes.

READ MORE

● **For more on the the 'industrial reserve army', see Capital Volume 1, Chapter 25** by Karl Marx bit.ly/CapitalCh25

● **Deciphering Capital: Marx's Capital and its destiny** Alex Callinicos £14.99

● **Do migrants lower wages?** Charlie Kimber bit.ly/Wages0921

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



“ ”

COMMENT

Hurricane Katrina—class, race and climate change

As flash flooding and tornadoes hit the north-east United States, **Sophie Squire** looks at the lessons from Hurricane Katrina in 2005

WHEN HURRICANE Katrina hit 16 years ago it wasn't just the ferocity of the storm that caused the devastation. It was a racist and unequal system that deemed some people weren't worthy of assistance.

Similarities can be seen across the US now. Hurricane Ida has destroyed areas in southern eastern states, including Louisiana, and moved northwards to the east coast hitting major cities such as New York. The destruction from Katrina in 2005 was mainly felt in New Orleans, Louisiana, which suffered a large proportion of the 1,800 deaths.

Before Katrina, it had been known for decades that the city was vulnerable to both flooding and hurricanes.

But money for flood defences was regarded as less important than war by then-president George Bush.

He instead funnelled federal money away from infrastructure projects into his imperialist War on Terror.

Result

This meant levees, or flood walls, fell into disrepair. As a result many burst because of storm surges caused by Katrina.

Around 50 levees broke in New Orleans alone leading to 80 percent of the city being submerged in filthy floodwater.

In New Orleans, race and class already determined where you lived. When Katrina hit it then determined if your home was destroyed by flooding.

Poor and predominantly black neighbourhoods such as St. Bernard Parish and the Ninth Ward, which lay below sea level, were devastated by the water.

When the floods hit, the suffering was extreme. Elderly residents of a care

MUCH OF New Orleans was underwater because of Katrina

home were abandoned and left to drown in the floods.

Hospitals collapsed, contributing to 47 percent of the deaths from the storm being attributed to preventable and chronic diseases.

Dying patients were abandoned to die alone.

Instead of helping survivors who screamed for help on the roofs of houses surrounded by floodwater, the state scrambled to protect private property.

The New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin gave the order for the police to concentrate on protecting shops against looters over search and rescue missions.

In a number of cases, the police shot to kill.

A black man named Henry Glover who had survived the initial floods was shot, beaten and then dragged into a car that was set alight by police officer David Warren.

The media turned on the black victims of Katrina, many who were demonised as “looters”. Meanwhile white victims were described

as “survivors”. Across the US and the world people watched the horror unfold.

Katrina became not just a hurricane.

It was an event that exposed the sheer brutality, racism and corruption that was endemic in US society.

The treatment of poor black people by the state was a reminder for many that in the US black lives simply didn't matter.

And the memory of Katrina was a part of the catalyst for the anger at state racism that fuelled the Black Lives Matter movement a decade later.

Warning Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath is a warning about the kind of brutality the system throws up when an environmental crisis hits.

Institutional racism means those in poorer areas are more likely to be black.

And those living in poorer areas are hit worse by weather changes.

The link between class, racism and environmental impacts are clear.

And repeated attacks and failures by the state that lead to anger can explode into resistance on a mass scale.

The Black Lives Matter movement today can build from the connections between race and the fight for the climate to tap into discontent and widen the struggle.

As extreme weather events become increasingly common, the fight for a better planned and more equal system is becoming ever more urgent.

“The media turned on the black victims of Katrina

Oppose rulers' conventions bathed in blood

by NICK CLARK

IT'S ARMS fair season. Over the next couple of months top politicians, generals, weapons makers and dealers will gather at three major conventions across Britain.

Here, the desperate want of Britain's warmongering politicians to remain an important military power meets the hunger for profits of those who deal in death.

For the Tory government, spending on high tech weapons and the military is key to trying to prop up Britain as the US's junior imperial partner.

The government's defence review was published this year.

It aimed to set out how Britain should keep its clout and celebrated that it spends more on defence than any other European country.

It also promised more arms spending, not just on missiles, fighter planes and warships, but new high tech "energy weapons" too.

For the arms companies, this is all a big chance to cash in. And the Tories are



AN ACTIVIST is arrested at protests at the DSEI arms fair in east London in 2019

very happy for Britain to be the place the world's governments come to arm themselves to the teeth.

That's why the ministry of defence and the department for international trade are official supporters of the DSEI arms fair in east London next week.

In turn, DSEI offers arms companies the chance to meet "UK and international defence ministers."

It entices them with the fact that the government

"has committed an additional £16.5 billion to its defence budget. That's the largest investment in 30 years."

Conference speakers include two Tory ministers, two top British Army generals, and another top officer from the US.

DSEI's "theme" is built on the government's defence review too.

One passage of the review says the government's priority is developing technologies for "near-peer, high-tech

warfighting." Much of the jargon—"integration of new technologies," "multi-domain operations and interoperability with allies,"—means preparing the military for total war with China.

It's all about re-arming the military, tailoring it to the needs of the US, making Britain indispensable.

DSEI says the conference will be a chance for the arms industry to find out how to "deliver" this.

In Liverpool, too, the AOC

Europe arms fair, set to take place in October, promises to bring together "world leading experts from the military, government, academia and industry."

The focus of this one is "electronic warfare." This is often just presented as ways of shutting down military equipment.

But the arms dealers there will also be selling space-age ways of killing—anti-aircraft lasers, electromagnetic "rail guns" and the like.

Though for all that, the arms industry clearly has a lucrative future in selling bombs, drones and fighter jets.

Embedded in a long defence of the West's retreat from Afghanistan, Joe Biden last week gave his vision for the future of US wars.

There'll be no more big invasions—no "boots on the ground".

Instead there will be more airstrikes of the sort that killed ten Afghan civilians just days before the final US soldier left last week.

It's not a new idea. The previous Democrat president Barak Obama pioneered

these "drone wars" when he became US president more than a decade ago.

So, at DSEI, men in suits will gawk at combat aircraft, drones and warships—bought and sold not just to Britain, but to repressive regimes such as Saudi Arabia, and to Israel for use against Palestinians.

After Israel's assault on Gaza earlier this year, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) are organising protests outside the fair.

And in Liverpool CAAT is set to protest on Saturday of this week.

Protests against the arms fair in Liverpool forced the city's mayor to oppose its going ahead.

Behind the security fences, the suited arms merchants can still be made to feel the pressure.

Stop the Liverpool Arms Fair: Saturday 11 Sept, assemble 11.30am, Princes Park, Entrance at End of Princes Avenue, or 12.30 pm: Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral.
Resist DSEI, Sunday 12 Sept, assemble 1pm, Forest Lane Park, E15

PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

JOIN THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

- ☐ Yes, I'd like to be a member
☐ I'd like more information and to receive emails

Name
Address
Postcode
Phone
Email

Return to SWP membership department,
PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ.
Or scan this QR code on your phone
Phone 020 7840 5602
Email membership@swp.org.uk



Subscribe to Socialist Worker

Have Socialist Worker delivered with your post every week for a direct debit of £5 a month

I want to subscribe to Socialist Worker with a monthly direct debit of £5

Name

Address.....

Postcode

E-mail

Phone

I would like ____ extra papers to sell
(this will not be deducted from my bank account)

For official use only—this is not part of the instructions to your bank/building society

Sherborne Publications,
PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by direct debit

Originator identification no. 9 7 3 3 5 5

Our reference no.

1. Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To the manager:

Bank/building society

Address

Postcode

2. Name(s) of account holder(s)

3. Branch sort code / /

4. Bank/building society account no.

.....

5. Instruction to your bank or building society
Please pay Sherborne Publications direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the direct debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Sherborne Publications and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account



Direct debit guarantee

■ This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.

■ If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Sherborne Publications will notify you ten working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Sherborne Publications to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.

■ If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by Sherborne Publications or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.

■ If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Sherborne Publications asks you to.

■ You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

Socialist Worker Subscriptions

Post PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ
Phone 020 7840 5601
Web www.socialistworker.co.uk

The land of the rich

WE ARE hearing a lot about “over use” of what is left of the natural environment by people going walking.

What seems to never be mentioned is that most non-arable land—land not used for farming—is not available to people seeking fresh air and some sense of space.

Something like 80 percent of non-arable land is held by a tiny number of people for their private use. For the rest of us, “Keep out—trespassers will be prosecuted.”

The police and crime bill, which makes trespass a criminal offence instead of a civil offence, will enforce this even more.

So, no plebs allowed in the countryside—the rich would rather keep it for hunting and shooting.

If it wasn't for the 1930s rebellion of mass trespasses we would not have the few national parks and the access we do have.

The rich do not need to breed and kill grouse and pheasant.

The industry causes great damage to the environment.

Prey species are killed relentlessly to preserve the birds for the shoot.

Uplands are kept free of trees which exacerbates flooding and landslip.

Birds are fed antibiotics to keep them alive until a month before the shoot—drugs which then enter the eco-system.

And vast tracts of land are fenced off to the rest of us who don't want to kill anything but just want to have access to the natural world.

Is it time for another trespass movement?

Julia Richardson
Swansea



Does Starmer really want the unions out of Labour?

I ENJOYED the interview with Bfawu union president Ian Hodson (Socialist Worker, 1 September). I would really urge him and his union to take the next step and to break from the Labour Party.

Labour left wingers rightly point to the failures of Keir Starmer and the right, but they stay inside a party that hates them.

It's been nearly ten months since Starmer said Jeremy Corbyn would not be allowed to sit as a Labour MP.

But there is no outcry, no effective action—and above all no attempt to group a new party around Corbyn.

It would be a step forward if Corbyn, other MPs, Ian Hodson and like-minded people in other

unions separated from Labour to found an alternative. The whole of the left would benefit.

Don't just leave Labour, set up something new that is based on resistance from below.

Harriet Lloyd
Wrexham

● IS IAN Hodson right that Keir Starmer doesn't want the trade unions in Labour?

They do provide useful funds, especially as the membership nosedives after his war on the left and Jeremy Corbyn's removal as a Labour MP.

More importantly, they offer a bridge to working class people and support during elections.

They are the outward sign that

Labour is still some sort of party for working class people.

What Starmer doesn't want is union leaders that oppose him actively. I can't imagine he loses much sleep over what, for example, the leaders of the Usdaw and Unison unions are doing.

They help him in the battles against the left.

Most of the trade unions that are affiliated to Labour may huff and puff but they rally round whenever an election approaches. This is what Starmer relies on.

It would be much better if they made themselves a force that genuinely worried Starmer.

Anne Grant
East London

Is 'feminist imperialism' the right term to use?

I DON'T disagree with Judy Cox's article on women in Afghanistan (Socialist Worker 1 September). But I think the term “imperialist feminism” is problematic.

Feminism has nothing to do with imperialism. Would we ever use the term “anti-Nazi imperialism”?

The US, Britain and Russia used anti-Nazi language to mobilize around the war economy and the army in the Second World War. Then they

divided the world and reorganized the balance of powers. Was that an “anti-Nazi imperialism”?

Or what about the European Union—a “capitalist internationalism”?

We should value socialist terminology. Words such as internationalism, anti-fascism, feminism and women's liberation belong to our collective history of working class struggles.

Thomas Markus Kvilhaug
On Facebook

How we show support for health workers

WE HAD quite a successful day of action outside the main hospital in Brighton and Hove recently.

We had over 20 people—a mixture of health workers, community activists and supporters—outside the hospital for two hours. They were leafletting and talking with health workers.

The message “1 percent was an insult, 3 percent is



Campaigning in Brighton

not enough, 15 percent, nothing less” went down very well.

But some health workers were very dubious about whether they will be strong enough to shift the government on this. For

health campaigners the task is clear—carry on with the protests and the demonstrations of support to show that health workers will not be standing alone.

Steve Guy
Brighton

Just a thought...

No excuse for war crimes

HEARING Labour politicians say Britain's war in Afghanistan wasn't a “failure,” because of 20 years of educating women and young girls, left me in shock.

I wonder what Keir Starmer would say of railways built in India during the British Empire?

Does this wash away the horrific treatment of Indians in the same way that educating women in Afghanistan washes away British war crimes?

Sky Golding
Manchester

High cost of occupation

BORIS Johnson warns of the danger of Afghanistan under the Taliban becoming a “narco state.”

But it was the Taliban that effectively suppressed poppy production.

Under the corrupt government that the US installed, opium production increased so that Afghanistan produced 90 percent of the world's heroin.

Opium production today is overwhelmingly in the hands of former government supporters, investing their profits in the Emirates, New York and, of course, London.

John Newsinger
Brighton

Charity used to back cuts

THE TORY government promotes families and community as an antidote for economic collapse.

In reality, these are a part of supportive social networks nurtured by solidarity. These have been ripped apart by austerity.

Politicians appeal to charity and philanthropy to inflict misery on millions. Solidarity can save us, not charity.

Thomas Baker
Birmingham

Plenty room for refugees

IF THERE is money for war, why not refugees?

England has 268,385 long-term empty homes. Why can't they be used?

Britain has 171 billionaires. Why can't their money be used?

Raju J Das
On Twitter

Anti-racists outnumber fascists in Croydon protests

Trade unionists and anti-fascists rallied in south London to say ‘Afghan refugees are welcome’ and to oppose racism, reports Michael Holland

OVER 120 anti-racists attended a vibrant and noisy Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) rally outside Lunar House in Croydon, south London, last Saturday. It houses the Home Office’s visa and immigration centre.

Fascists had called their own rally to stir up racism against refugees to which Croydon SUTR quickly organised a response.

The Nazis were outnumbered by at least ten to one. A group of about 30 Antifa activists also held their own mobile rally.

Margot, a UCU union member from Croydon College, addressed the rally. She said, “My students are from Croydon, with backgrounds from all around the world.

“They learn together and achieve together. They totally reject the racism of the far right”.

Passers-by joined the rally and cars tooted their horns.

A group of refugee women, who had been inside Lunar House, came out, took up some placards and joined in with singing, “Say it loud, say it clear, refugees are welcome here”.

Solidarity

Adam, from Croydon Refugee Forum, said, “We will always stand in solidarity with our fellow Afghan refugees.

“We will ensure that they will receive a very warm welcome in our community.

“Any racist abuse and attack is an attack on all of our community, we do not tolerate far-right and fascist groups.”

There were many different organisations represented at the rally that all came together to reject both racism and fascism.

Paula, from Croydon Disabled People Against Cuts, said “We must unite and challenge racism and organise and educate in our communities. We say refugees are welcome here.”

BACK STORY

Britain’s new resettlement scheme will allow just 20,000 Afghan refugees into the country in the next five years

● If Afghan refugees do get to Britain they could be forced to live on as little as £5.64 per day. Which amounts to £39.63 per week.

● Anti-racists must reject the racist far right argument that refugees will be a drain on resources.

Michael, a NEU member and Croydon resident, said “Not only must we take on the Nazis and tell them they are not welcome.

“But we also have to fight against the racism of this Tory government. It uses division, to smokescreen the fact that the rich are getting richer.”

The rally was also attended by members of the Afghan community who live in Croydon.

Dewa, who is deeply worried about the safety of her family in Afghanistan, said “I will tell my family about this demonstration.

“It will give them hope to know what people in Croydon are doing. The government needs to let people from my country in.

“Britain and the US have played a huge part in making Afghanistan unsafe for people. Now they should let them in,” she added.

Other speakers included activists from charity Care4Calais, the RMT union, Extinction Rebellion and refugee groups.

The protest finished with a rousing chorus of “We are black, white, Muslim and we’re Jews... There are many, many more of us than you.”

There was also a commitment to continue to build anti-racist networks in the area and to campaign for a welcoming environment in Croydon for all refugees.



RALLY OUTSIDE the Home Office immigration centre at Lunar House in south London last week

Independence activists rally against Trident and for a new referendum

by HÉCTOR SIERRA and KEITH PENDER

THE SCOTTISH independence movement is returning to the streets in a renewed push to achieve a referendum that would break up the British state.

Marches were set for Stirling this Saturday and Edinburgh on 25 September. These will be the first marches called by the All Under One Banner (AUOB) independence campaign since January 2020.

In the run-up to these mobilisations, activists have held static events. Last Saturday about 200 people joined a rally for independence and for a nuclear-free Scotland organised by AUOB at the Faslane nuclear weapons base. This is the site of Britain’s Trident missile programme.

The rally was supported by the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the SNP CND group among others.

It represented a shift for AUOB which normally organises marches and rallies only on the question of independence.

Speakers highlighted what the £205 billion to be spent on Trident could be used for. Some highlighted funding the NHS or building council housing.



Rally in Faslane

Others pointed to the hypocrisy of the Tory government claiming that it doesn’t have money to welcome Afghan refugees while it clearly has money for the weapons used in wars that make people refugees.

Socialist activist Lorna McKinnon said at the rally, “What a blow it would be to the Tories and their system if we broke up the British state with independence and started building a society that puts people before profit and war.”

The rally was younger than most independence events organised during the pandemic.

The issue of Trident and the fact the rally wasn’t solely about independence motivated some young people to travel to Faslane.

McKinnon added, “In a world that’s so deeply in crisis, we can’t just postpone these struggles until after independence—because it’s not inevitable that

independence will make a better society.”

On Tuesday of last week, around 120 people joined a demonstration called by the Now Scotland campaign group at the Edinburgh parliament.

It was organised to coincide with the return of the parliament and to demand that the new SNP-Green Party government steps up plans for a new referendum.

Speakers talked of their frustration at the Scottish government and the need to make another independence referendum a priority.

Former SNP MP George Kerevan spoke of the danger of working class people who backed Yes in 2014 becoming disillusioned if the SNP doesn’t push more for independence.

The SNP and the Greens have spoken about a new referendum within the lifetime of this parliament. But there is no strategy to go forwards in face of the Tories’ refusal to grant a vote.

Militant mass mobilisation, more confrontational than has taken place so far, can challenge the Tories and pressure the Scottish government.

For details of the Stirling and Edinburgh marches go to the All Under One BannerFacebook

RAIL WORKERS

Tell SNP it's right to strike during Cop26

THE SCOTTISH National Party (SNP), which is sometimes thought to be a "radical" alternative, is telling rail workers not to strike.

The SNP is worried that strikes might hit the image of Scotland as the Cop26 international climate conference takes place in November.

So five SNP MSPs in Glasgow issued a statement saying that the public would not look kindly on disruption to the summit.

The MSPs said they were targeting what they call the "London based" leadership.

But the strike has been supported and led by workers in Scotland, not some remote group.

Justice

RMT union general secretary Mick Lynch said, "Having sat on their backsides for over six months while ScotRail workers have been fighting for basic pay justice and equality it is sheer bare-faced cheek for the SNP to suddenly issue disgraceful statements demanding that our members call off their disputes."

Lynch has rightly told RMT members that strikes during Cop26 "would be an excellent

WORKERS ON East Midlands Railways are continuing Sunday strikes over pay and contracts

way of highlighting" the union's pay demands.

They would also emphasise the important role of public transport in reducing carbon emissions.

The pay issue is separate to the conductors' dispute over payments for working on days off.

The pay fight has seen the cancellation of many ScotRail trains on Sundays since March.

RMT members are being recommended to back both a strike and action short of a strike "during the whole duration of the Cop26 conference".

Meanwhile ScotRail conductors struck solidly again last Sunday, halting travel between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Unite union members who are engineers have now voted for strikes from mid-September over pay with ScotRail

operator Abellio. Unless ScotRail workers win before, the strikes must go ahead during Cop26.

■ Bus drivers at Stagecoach East Midlands, members of the RMT union, are to take action over pay.

Workers at the Mansfield and Worksop depots will ban overtime and rest day working between 17 September and 1 October.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Reinforcements for the Scottish councils pay fight

SCOTTISH GMB union members in local government have moved closer to industrial action.

Some 95 percent of union members who participated in a consultative ballot rejected the present pay offer.

Cosla, the umbrella body representing council employers, is offering just an £850 increase for workers earning up to £25,000 a year.

The union will now move to a full industrial action ballot.

It will cover nearly 10,000 members employed in schools, refuse and cleansing services across Scotland.

Unison union members have already started a strike ballot over the pay issue.

There needs to be a big vote for strikes and then hard-hitting action.

UNISON

Extra strike pay is agreed

THE LEFT on the Unison union's industrial action committee has secured an increase in strike pay.

Members who were elected this year as part of the Time For Real Change group agreed the request from the Scottish local government committee.

At first the chair and vice-chair of the industrial action committee were

told that such a decision exceeded their authority and was not within the rules.

But they persisted with the demand and the new rate has been acted on.

This means that if Scottish Unison members strike they will have access to the higher rates of pay that are allowed in the other Scottish local government unions.

UNIVERSITY WORKERS



Strikers on the march last year

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

University workers are ready for major battle

UNIVERSITY workers say industrial action is "inevitable" after employers decided to push ahead with swingeing cuts to their pensions.

The bosses' body, Universities UK (UUK), wants to slash employer contributions to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).

Some workers would face up to a 35 percent cut to their pensions.

This is the latest in a series of repeated attacks on the USS scheme. UCU union members staged huge strikes in response in 2018 and 2020.

Carlo Morelli, UCU Dundee university branch co-chair, told Socialist Worker he thinks members are ready to strike again.

"Covid-19 caused strikes to be called off last year," he said.

"More than a year of the pandemic has shown

just how much university workers are relied on.

"Workers have really been abused, workload is through the roof and all of these pressures are becoming intolerable.

"Many will also be angry that university bosses are pushing through redundancies and restructuring."

Carlo added, "We could be looking at balloting members at the start of the first term.

"This will mean we could be on strike by the end of the year.

The implementation of the new scheme will be next April.

"We can't strike for a few days this time—we have to strike until we beat the attack.

"If we don't go ahead with industrial action and strikes, the outcome will be that we lose our pensions. It's that simple."

Sophie Squire

ROUND-UP

Tell Sajid Javid that the 3 percent is not enough

UNIONS representing hundreds of thousands of health workers are in the final stages of balloting members on the Tories' derisory 3 percent pay rise in England.

But is vital that activists keep up the pressure, and get every last vote to reject.

The Nurses United organisation is set to target health secretary Sajid Javid this week by lobbying his West Midlands constituency office.

Their Three Strikes, We're Out! campaign points out the vital role that health workers have played during the pandemic—and the appalling levels of NHS pay.

● Protest, Saturday 11 September, 3pm, Sajid Javid's constituency office, 18 High Street, Bromsgrove B6. For more details see nursesunited on Facebook.

■ PARTS OF Lancashire and Liverpool could face severe disruption this autumn if bus workers employed by Ribble Motor Services Ltd, part of the Stagecoach group, vote for strikes over pay.

The ballot covers hundreds of workers in the Unite union based at the company's depots in Preston, Chorley and Gilmoor.

■ Workers have protested after cleaning worker and trade union rep Guillermo Camacho was victimised and then sacked from his job at Facebook headquarters in London.

Guillermo, who is a member of the Caiwu union, faced disciplinary action after he and other cleaners mounted a campaign against outsourcer Churchill Group.

VICTIMISATION

Solidarity for Paul Holmes

AROUND 100 people joined a solidarity rally for victimised union rep Paul Holmes on Monday as his disciplinary hearing began.

There was also an online rally at the same time.

Paul's bosses at Kirklees council suspended him in November 2019.

As branch secretary of Kirklees Unison, Paul has led strikes and campaigns against council cuts.

There were four ballots among Kirklees workers resisting cuts and bullying at the time that Paul was suspended.

Now—after a 15-month investigation—Paul's disciplinary hearing has begun.

Paul is also the elected president of Unison.

The whole union needs to get behind him and make sure that justice is served in the case. Paul has won support from MPs including John McDonnell.

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

Testing time for bosses

DRIVING TEST workers at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) began a strike ballot this week.

Bosses are demanding an increase to eight tests a day per worker.

The PCS union says this would impact on driving examiners' performance, leading to an increased risk of accidents.

It will also hit workers' health, safety, and welfare.

The change is being pushed through without formal negotiation.

The PCS is balloting driving examiner and driving test centre manager members in a vote that closes on 20 September.

■ A PCS campaign has resulted in 97 percent of staff employed as agency workers by Brook Street in the Department for Work and Pensions becoming directly employed by the DWP

UNIVERSAL CREDIT CUTS MEAN IT'S 'HEAT OR EAT'

The Tories are pressing ahead with a £20 a week cut to Universal Credit. Two claimants told Socialist Worker how it will hit them

KEITH CANNOT be late. It's 11 miles to his nearest Job Centre and if he arrives more than five minutes after his appointment he could be "sanctioned" and lose part of his benefits.

In Wotton, Norfolk, people without cars are forced to rely on rural buses that are infrequent and unreliable. The trip he must make twice a month costs him £5.50 each time, and is not refunded.

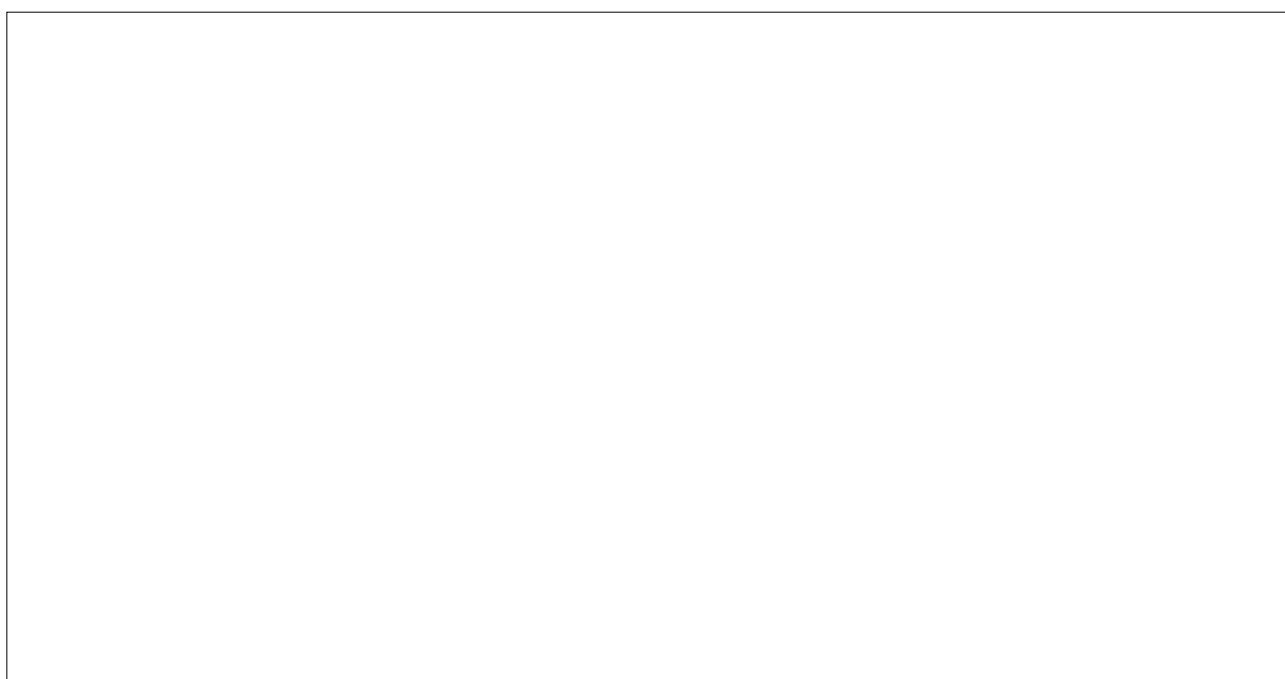
"If you arrive at the Job Centre more than five minutes early, they don't let you in the building," he told Socialist Worker.

Streets

No matter the weather, he and other claimants are forced to wait in the streets until the right time.

"But it's far worse if you are late," he says.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) wrote to Keith this week saying his benefits will be cut by £87 a



MANY FOODBANKS are already overwhelmed by people needing support

month as the government is withdrawing its "Covid Uplift".

"I already budget the pennies," he told Socialist Worker.

"This week the gas firm also wrote to me and said my bill will rise by 5 percent.

"I live in a poorly insulated house, so this winter the choice is going to be between heating and eating."

Keith is trying to work out how he'll survive.

In the past, he'd avoided using the foodbank because there seemed to be people worse off than him. But now, he's unlikely to have a choice.

"I got laid off from my job in a call centre in March 2020, but I was put on furlough," he said. "The trouble is 80 percent of my old pay is

less than the minimum wage, so you can't save any money."

"Then I had to go onto Universal Credit. It takes five weeks before you get any money. It's a real struggle to survive that period."

Keith had a company pension of £70 a month from an old job, but Universal Credit took all of that money out of his benefits. In order

to keep receiving his benefits, Keith must follow a rigid routine of "showing commitment" to looking for work.

Every two weeks he must use Teams software on his laptop to attend an appointment with job seeker "advisers". Again, if he doesn't turn up, he runs the risk of being sanctioned.

But Keith finds the



Keith faces dire poverty

software difficult to use, and if he can't make it work there's no one to help.

"You can't get through to the advisers on the phone. If you try to leave a message on their answerphone, you find it is full up."

Nevertheless, in order to attend these online mandatory meetings, and to open his Job Centre messages, Keith must be online. And that costs him another £20 a month.

"I used to be able to use the computers at the library and their wifi," he said. "But since Covid they've taken away many of the computers."

No Tory MP would think twice about a restaurant bill of £87 once a month. But for millions of people like Keith, that sum is the difference between shivering through the cold months, or putting simple food on the table.

'The Tories have a workhouse mentality, they think that the poor are lazy'

THE FIRST six weeks on Universal Credit (UC) were the hardest for Boglarka and her two teenage children who live together in east London.

"I had to borrow money from friends and family just for us to survive," she told Socialist Worker.

"All we had coming in was £35 a week child benefit.

"And, you don't want to ask the DWP for an 'advance' loan because you know that you'll never be able to pay it back."

Boglarka, now works part time, and found a way to manage on Universal Credit by being extremely

careful with money. But this week she found out that the government are taking away £86 a month and she doesn't know what she'll do.

"What they are doing is absolutely savage," she says.

"The Tories have a workhouse mentality. They think poor people are lazy and should be able to provide for themselves.

"Now, I'm trying to work out how I'll clothe my children and pay the bills.

"Our local food bank is already overwhelmed by people who have recently lost their jobs."

Boglarka is also furious



Unions should have organised more protests PICTURE: ROGER BLACKWELL

with the Labour Party. "They've abandoned people like us," she says.

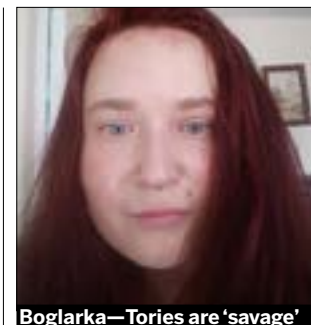
"Poor people no longer know where to turn for support."

She is right to be angry.

The £20 a week Universal Credit cut will hit one in every 14 workers in Britain. Boris Johnson claims his decision to slash the benefit supports those who earn "through their efforts".

Yet 40 percent of UC claimants, 2.3 million people, already have a job.

But they are forced to claim the benefit because their pay or hours are so low.



Boglarka—Tories are 'savage'

Labour should be ramming stories such as Keith and Boglarka's down the Tories' throats.

Instead the party says it cannot even commit to restoring the benefit cut if it comes to office.